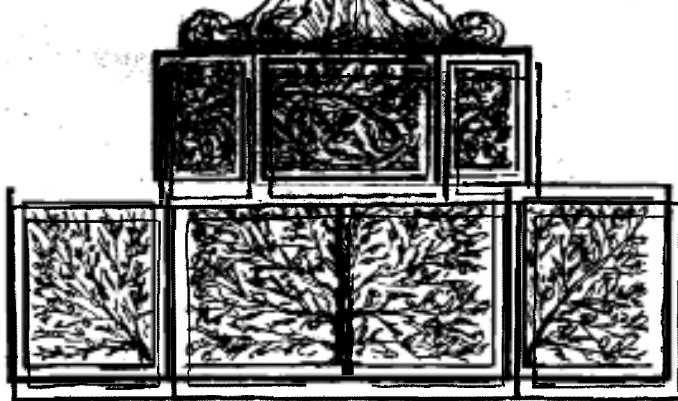


"A Candlestick of Pure Gold: of Beaten Work" Exodus 25. 31.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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



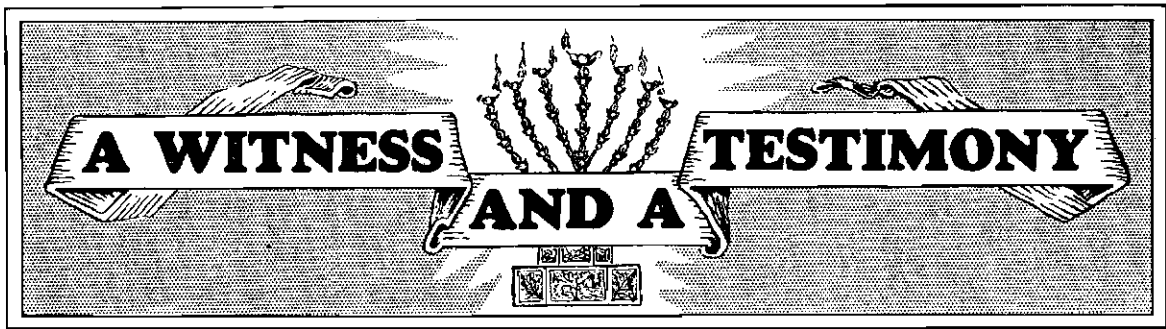
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957.

Vol. 35, No. 1.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL 1	THE BED OF THE MAN OF GOD 12
THE JOY OF THE LORD	THE ISRAEL OF GOD (I) 15
IS YOUR STRENGTH 4	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS 19
FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH	A MESSAGE FOR THE HOUR 21
ADVERSITY (IV) 7	
A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A SHORT LIFE 23	

EDITORIAL

ONE of the greatest needs of our time is to plough our way down through the heavy and tangled growth of Christian doctrines to the virgin soil of spiritual life and reality. A master-stroke of the great subverter, in his purpose to neutralise spiritual effectiveness against his kingdom, has been the resolving of Christianity into an endless system or series of doctrines, most of them in conflict with each other. By these Christianity has been crippled and frustrated, turned in on itself, and a state of civil (or uncivil) war has been created.

The Church cannot move, as an integrated and single-fronted body, against a very powerful and wily foe, because it does not believe together; its mind is divided into so many conflicting interpretations.

This means that authority has almost entirely disappeared. Men have repeatedly tried to correct this by forming creeds, confessions of faith, principles and practice, etc., but these only serve to form groups, widen breaches, harden antagonisms, create superiorities, and foster complacencies; they never solve the problem of *spiritual* dividedness. They engender suspicion, breathe an atmosphere of fear, and stimulate a mentality of heresy.

All this is due to certain fundamental weaknesses and defectivenesses in Christian life.

One of these is a wholly objective approach to Christian truth.

There are two aspects of this.

(a) The exhausting of truth as such, so that a state of saturation and finality is reached, and the whole matter is reduced to the best text-book, manual, 'authority' or 'classic' on the subject. Book succeeds book, and the matter is covered, embodied and compassed in a library.

Do you want to know what is the fullest presentation of any given 'truth'? So-and-so and such-and-such is the answer. It is in book form. That is 'the last word'. If someone has something 'fresh' or 'original' or a bit off the beaten and well-worn track, he is either suspect or creates a vogue which obtains for a time and then falls into line or passes out. Generally, that sort of thing is just not allowed.

(b) But an even deeper and more serious aspect of this objective approach is the immense cleavage between the verbal statement of truth and the inward illumination.

Here traditional, spiritual Christianity is in violent dividedness, bitter conflict, and complete confusion. In this dividedness an extreme position is taken by one side. The Bible says so-and-so. It

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

just says that, in actual words. Unless it is obviously and unmistakably parable, simile, symbol, allegory, or figure, it *must* be taken just as it stands. All that it means is on the surface of the simple verbal expression. There is no place or allowance for any interpretation, deeper, fuller, or other meaning than that which is conveyed by the words themselves. In the realm where this is the beginning and end of the whole matter, positively no place is allowed for any fuller light, other meaning, or clearer understanding. As a consequence of this rigid attitude no new experience of fuller or clearer illumination is tolerated, but is at once written off as dangerous.

We know of a 'Faith Mission' (so-called) which demanded the resignation of any of its missionaries or staff who claimed to have any new experience based upon a new revelation of Christian truth. In this way it is trying to safeguard itself against certain 'isms'.

It is true that the Scriptures themselves forbid 'private interpretations', 'wresting the Scriptures', "handling the word of God deceitfully". It is also true that a very different and much better situation would exist in Christianity if Christians took more careful note of, and gave more implicit obedience to, just what the Scriptures say. We are often shocked and appalled that Christians who have the Bible can so easily violate its so clearly stated injunctions. If the Bible is read at all by vast numbers of Christians it surely is read far too objectively!

But, given that there should be a meticulous observance of the letter of the Word, is that all?

Of course we have no sympathy with any position that is *above* the Word. If, for instance, the Bible says that 'if a man does not work he shall not eat', there is no *spiritual* getting round that by an able-bodied person. That must be taken literally! It is dangerous and pernicious to be 'spiritually' above the clear statements of God's Word, just as much as to ignore them. Many have their spiritual life strangled, thwarted, arrested, limited, because they do not, or will not, obey the Lord in some clear statement of His Word.

But when all that can be said along that line has been said, is it not also a dangerous, harmful, and mistaken thing to reduce the life of the child of God to a merely mechanical, automatic, 'penny-in-the-slot' kind of thing? That is, to exclude the possibility that the Scriptures—in whole or part—have a meaning which is either more or other than we have seen? to take the position that we have the true and full meaning at first sight and in the words employed to convey truth? If it were not

the case, it would be hard to believe that many Christians, and among them leaders, do take such a position. To such it is heresy to speak of fuller light, illumination or 'revelation' as to what the Scriptures contain or mean. Such people forbid any 'experience' based upon such illumination, but what a static and coldly legal Christian life theirs must be! We do not overlook a much more thoroughgoing 'study' of Scripture, with 'aids' and comparings, but whether it be little or much, the ultimate issue is the difference between an intellectual approach and Holy Spirit enlightenment.

Well, with the fullest recognition of the perils of *any* position carried to an extreme, one way or the other, we are compelled to face some facts. These lie in two directions: (a) in the Bible itself; (b) in the history of God's ways since. But before we do this let us say that we know how impossible it is for us to resolve by argument the problem with which we commenced this editorial. We shall come to the true solution presently.

The outstanding illustration and example of the defectiveness of holding the verbal presentation of Scripture without spiritual illumination is surely Israel.

The Hebrew Prophets are just full of this failure; indeed, it might be said that this is both the heart and the sum of their ministry. This long history headed up to and became the root-cause of the crucifixion of Jesus. It was this 'blindness' that He was encountering all the days of His ministry. It is a searching and challenging statement, with extended significance, that—

"They that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew . . . not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him . . . and . . . asked . . . of Pilate that he should be slain" (Acts xiii. 27, 28).

Then to take another instance. This holding of the Scriptures without *inner illumination* was the explanation of the breakdown, scattering, offence, and disconsolateness of the disciples after the crucifixion. They had the Scriptures. Jesus did not give them the Bible as something of which they had never heard. They knew their Bibles *in an objective way*. But it is a solemn fact that their kind of Bible knowledge did not mean anything to them in the day of the fiery ordeal. "Selah"—think of that!

See the two representatives of the rest on the Emmaus road. What the Lord did was not to give them the Scriptures, but to 'open their understanding that they might understand' them. *That was an experience!* That made all the difference!

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

To go on with the instances. Was there a man who had a better knowledge of and devotion to the Scriptures than 'Saul of Tarsus'? It was this very thing that accounted for his vehement antagonism to Jesus and His followers. But listen to his later confession:

"I verily thought . . . that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9).

There is much more like this from Paul. But, again, it is a solemn reflection that it is possible to be so utterly wrong while believing that we are in line with Scripture.

One more instance in the Bible. No less a person than Peter himself had a big crisis on this very issue. His controversy with the Lord—a bit of the old Peter—over 'unclean things' and 'going in to eat with Gentiles' was based upon his apprehension of the Scripture of Leviticus xi, an absolutely governing Scripture for Jews. That that Scripture, in the meaning that Jews, including Peter commonly gave to it, did not hold good in heaven, at least since the Cross, is implicit and unmistakable in the voice accompanying and ending the vision of Acts x. And yet Peter could find his scriptural support for saying: "Not so, Lord". It could have been disastrous to his apostleship and ministry if he had stuck to his own apprehension of Scripture. What an immense thing issued from the revolutionary new light that came to him. It was indeed an experience!

Through the ages, when God has moved on in His purposes, a new development has so often been based upon a new illumination or revelation of His word. So often such has been quite revolutionary in the life of those concerned, and they have not hesitated to refer to it as a revelation from God, although, of course, *never extra to the Scriptures*, but only as to their content and meaning.

So it was with such men as Dr. A. T. Pierson, Dr. Hudson Taylor, Bishop Handley Moule.

In the case of Dr. Pierson, he had been brought up, trained, and ordained in a certain interpretation of Scripture, and spent half of his life teaching and practising accordingly, gaining considerable eminence in that connection. In mid-life, or after, he received what he referred to as new light, and said that 'God has shown me'. This related to a fundamental interpretation of much in the Scriptures. This new light and *altogether different* interpretation (the exact opposite to his old conviction and teaching) cost him his church, his denomination, and favour in his whole erstwhile realm;

but it led to a new and world-wide ministry, which was the ministry for which he is known by so many of God's people and is extant in his books.

As to Dr. Hudson Taylor: it will go without any argument that he would know as well as anyone the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel. But it was when God gave him a new revelation of the inner meaning of that Scripture that, leaping into a new experience, he was saved from the darkest time, and the work of God went on. The story can be read in the monumental *Life*, in the chapter called 'The Exchanged Life'.

Dr. Handley Moule's association with the 'Keswick' testimony is well-known and his ministry therefrom has enriched multitudes. But remember—that association was born of a big battle on the Scriptures, and Dr. Moule was no novice in that realm. Only by new and revolutionary light on the Word did he come into the 'experience' and the resultant ministry.

And so we could repeat the story in numerous instances. That 'The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word' is not disputed by many, but sometimes the breaking forth may prove revolutionary for one whose apprehension has been quite mistaken.

Let us here pause to say that this issue is not really one of alternatives, i.e. between the literal statements of Scripture and the spiritual meaning. It is really the balance between the objective and the subjective. The loss of this balance on either side is the cause of the loss of very much real value and effectiveness. That the 'letter' is not all that has the very authority of Christ Himself behind the statement.

That it is possible to have a new revelation, *extra to and apart from the Scripture*, no one ought to believe. But to have "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" is *Scripture for Christians*.

We have not even yet reached the very heart of this whole matter. We commenced by saying that a great need of our time is to break through the matted tangle of systematized doctrine to the soil of life. How can this be done, and what does it really mean?

The answer lies in a return to spiritual life. This is a return from the merely intellectual, traditional, and 'accepted' school-realm of Christian interpretation of our construction of the Scriptures, to what the Lord meant when He said: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life."

Alongside of that He said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing".

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

The "flesh" surely is the unilluminated natural mind of I Corinthians ii. This constitutes an impasse, Paul says; and it is instanced and demonstrated in Nicodemus, "the teacher in Israel", when it came to "heavenly things", (John iii).

This impasse obtains and remains for all who know nothing of the indwelling, inward illumination of the anointing Spirit—the Teacher within. Those whose only approach to the Scriptures is objective are thus handicapped.

Did Jesus say of the coming Spirit: "He shall guide you into all the truth"? Surely to be *guided into* all the truth is something more than having the truth presented, conveyed, and written down!

Did Paul pray for *believers* that they might be given "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (i.e. Christ)? Surely that is an

imparted faculty, ability, *in* the believer, and more than natural equipment!

Did John write: "The anointing which ye received abideth in you, and . . . teacheth you concerning all things"? Surely this is an *inward* activity of the Holy Spirit, and more than the result of reading the Bible without that work!

The only hope for oneness of mind and spiritual authority in the Church is the absolute Lordship and mastery of mind, heart and will by the Holy Spirit; a crucified selfhood in all these respects. This is life, power, assurance, and impact upon the world.

It is the return to or discovery of the life in the Spirit. "The Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "The veil is taken away". "*In that day ye shall know*"—"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come".

EDITOR

 THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

"*Go your way; eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord. Neither be ye grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*" (Nehemiah viii. 10)—or, stronghold—"The joy of the Lord is your stronghold".

My intention is just to take that last sentence—"The joy of the Lord is your stronghold".

Really to get the meaning and value of that statement, it is necessary, of course, to see it in relation to the context; that is, in its setting in this whole book: so we must approach it along that line.

AN END-TIME MESSAGE

You are aware, I believe, that Nehemiah is the last bit of inspired Hebrew history in the Bible. Its position, of course, in the binding, is a little misleading, but that is the fact. Until the year 1560, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were one book, and they were called the First and Second Books of Ezra. They go together; they form what I have said is the last piece of inspired Hebrew history in the Bible, i.e., in the Old Testament. Now, of course, as you read these two books, you find yourself in the presence of conditions which are not difficult to discern in our own time. These

books mark events and conditions at the end of the 'old' dispensation. They cover about one hundred and twenty years, Ezra and Nehemiah give the history of that period, Zechariah and Haggai are the Prophets of the same period. And during that one hundred and twenty years, beginnings had been made to try to recover what had been lost when Israel went into captivity. A remnant returned, and set to work to try to rebuild, and then the effort faded, and a period of some years marked inaction; and then another attempt was made, a little progress was achieved, and another interruption, and another period of inaction and silence and waiting. One period lasted for sixty years with repeated attempts to recover the original position and fulness, but by reason of a low state of spiritual life, spiritual declension and weakness, there were these interruptions, these periods of inaction, when the work of recovery was suspended.

It is not difficult to see a similarity between that dispensation and this. Remember the days of fulness under Joshua—what days they were! Conquest and possession and fulness! Remember the days under David—what days they were! What a forty years of fulness and life! How the order of God obtained! And now—look at all that has been lost.

We too, we Christians, look back to beginnings in fulness, the great days of the Church at the be-

ginning, what fulness! what life! what Divine order! And then—the same things happened. Many attempts have been made to recover: movements have taken place, and then they have faded out. For some reason they have been arrested; the whole thing has been brought into suspense. And there are those periods in the history of the Church when nothing was happening, all seemed to be silent; and then a fresh movement, and for a time, things seemed to be back on the way again; and again, interruption—and that is the history of the Church. And I think that to-day there is not a very great deal of difference between the situation as in Nehemiah's time and our own. Lost fulness, ruined Divine order, through spiritual declension, a low standard of spiritual life.

THE FORMER GLORY—AND NOW

The people who had this burden upon their hearts are the people who are here before us in the Book called the Book of Nehemiah. Look then into their hearts, and you will get the clue to these words of this verse. First of all, they were very conscious of the difference between what things were formerly and what they were in their own day. That comes out very clearly. There were old men who remembered, and when they saw even this reproduction, wept; when they remembered the former glory, they said that this was nothing like it was. Of course, there are always a lot of people who are always living sentimentally in a past, but in this case it was quite true; and while we do not want to be pessimistic and melancholy, there is no doubt about it, that conditions to-day are very different from what they were at the beginning; and although we have not lived in those days, we know well enough, both in the Word, and in our hearts, that a great deal has been lost: the Church is not to-day the effective, spiritually wealthy thing that it was at the beginning.

And then these people were also bitterly conscious of their own loss, their own spiritual loss. You know that they had lost their language: and there, as they were gathered together by Ezra and Nehemiah, they had to have a large number of interpreters scattered among them, when the Scriptures were read, because, in the seventy years, they had lost their own language, and did not understand the Scriptures; and as the Word was read in public, the interpreters had to say—'That is that; the meaning of that is so-and-so': and they were conscious, made keenly conscious, that they had lost their understanding of the Word of God. It is a very paralysing thing to realise that the

Word of God is so very largely closed; there is so little spiritual understanding of the things of God. You know how baffling it is to realise that God's Word is not an open book, and is not a disclosed revelation to the heart. Well, that is how they were, a great deal had been lost in that way.

And then their desire, strong as it was, and true as it was, to recover this testimony, this former glory, this former fulness, was beset by enemies on every side. You know the story—Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, and all the rest—enemies all round! A little, weakened, despised, crippled people, of so little account, and enemies everywhere. "What do these *feeble* Jews?" All that, I say, constituted a situation, a state of things, very disheartening, and created a need for some refuge from despair, some refuge from overwhelming sense of weakness and hopelessness, some stronghold into which to flee.

In that context we have these encouraging words:—"Neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." What does that mean, what does the 'joy of the Lord' mean? The *Lord's* joy—a stronghold: that is the word here. 'The Lord's joy—a stronghold'. Well, see it as you may from the earthly standpoint; but the Lord is evidently looking upon this in a different way, from Heaven.

You know, it does not look like it, but if you like to go to Isaiah xxxv. 10 you will find these words "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads . . .; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." That was a prophecy as to the return of this very remnant. The Lord sees here a ransomed people. It was never any pleasure or joy to the Lord that they went into exile—that broke His heart. If the cry of the prophets echoed the heart of God, it was a broken heart, when His people had to go into exile and captivity. And when the Lord brought again out of captivity a people, be they but a small people, a despised and weakened people, nevertheless, a people whose *heart* was set upon His satisfaction, the Lord had something that gave Him joy, and turned His sorrow away. The joy of the Lord is in having a people, be it never so small, so despised, so weak, nevertheless, whose heart is set upon that which is according to His heart. If you are in oneness with the heart-beat of God, you may have many enemies, and you may have many things to deplore and grieve over, in yourself, and in yourselves, nevertheless, if you are one with the heart-purpose of God, you are right in the way of the Lord's delight, the Lord's pleasure, the Lord's joy; that can be a refuge for you. It is a tremen-

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

dous thing to have the assurance that, after all, weak as we may be, imperfect as we may be, despised as we may be, opposed and persecuted as we may be, nevertheless, we are on the line of the Lord. Our hearts are for the Lord; it is what will satisfy the Lord that is the only thing that concerns us. Remember, that is a strong position. The Lord draws around such His mighty defences: it is all right! You are in a strong position if you are one with Him, no matter what you may be in yourself.

A RANSOMED PEOPLE

In having a ransomed people—ah, yes,—not only in that initial sense, of being converted and saved, but a people ransomed from what Babylon means! Ransomed from those conditions which have emaciated and weakened and spoiled His testimony through the ages. Ransomed from those things—they *are* His people, but His people as a ransomed people; not ransomed in that they have *become* His people, but now as His people, they are ransomed from those things. That is a special joy to the Lord. And to be with the Lord in that, is to be in a strong position—"the joy of the Lord is your stronghold".

A REPRESENTATIVE REMNANT

But then, they were also a representative people. You know the Lord has always found joy in something that is representative of His mind. In every sphere it is like that. Take the harvest—well, He ordained that in the time of the harvest, they should go out in the fields and scan the crops, every day, to discover, to see, the very first ripe ears, and when they found, over the whole field, just a few ripe ears, according to His ordinance, they gathered them, and brought them into the presence of the Lord, as representing all the rest that would come afterward; and there was joy, the joy of harvest, in just the few ears. It was something taken account of by the Lord—a simple Divine ordinance, but embodying a wonderful principle. And you can extend that over other things, such as the firstborn as precious to the Lord—it is representative. Now to-day, He is the Firstborn from among the dead, and oh, the preciousness of Him, as representative of all the sons that He is going to bring. This remnant was representative of God's thought and mind about His people; and they, therefore, were very precious to Him, *very* precious to Him. Malachi, the last one to prophesy, makes it very clear: 'They shall be my peculiar treasure in that day

that I do make'. Something specially precious to the Lord. And, dear friends, it is a strong position to be in, to be very precious to the Lord: as representative of His mind; when there may be much otherwise, that He might have some who do answer to His heart. 'My peculiar treasure'—something the Lord gathers around, as though that were to be looked after for Him.

THE LORD DOES NOT LOSE HEART

Here in this, we have a recovered testimony, and everywhere, everywhere it is made so clear in the Word, the Lord has never given up; everything may have seemed to have gone at times. Yes, there may be long periods of silence, with nothing happening, but the Lord has not abandoned it; He has not given up. And any sign of movement, again and again, towards completion, restoration, finds Him there, finds Him in that, finds Him interested, finds Him alive. Here in Nehemiah, so far as would be, and could be, under those Old Testament conditions, things were coming to completion, the wall was being finished, the Temple was built, the testimony was being recovered in representation, in type, and, well, here is the spirit of it. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord". Holy unto our Lord—something sacred to the Lord. "Neither be ye grieved; FOR the joy of the Lord is your stronghold".

In a word, it is to be in a strong position to be in what the Lord really desires and has His heart set upon—His pleasure. Even if there is much to regret, much for which to be sorry, and even if there is much opposition, if there is that which the Lord really wants, it is a strong position to be in. "The joy of the Lord is your stronghold".

HOW THE LORD SEES THINGS

You see, the Lord sees everything. The Lord did not just see those poor attempts, those imperfect successes, but He saw them in the light of His end; He saw this was right in line with the end. Oh yes, this city may be a comparatively poor thing, even when it is finished, and it may fail again: but the Lord sees beyond this. It is a token, it is a pointer, it is in the direct line of His eternal city. He sees through this city to the greater City. You see, this is symbolic of that ultimate, and although this will fail, ah, it is on the way to the one that will never fail, and the Lord sees through the token, to that which it betokens. We may only

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

have the token, and it may be poor and imperfect, but, it is precious to the Lord because it is in line with what He is after, what He has set His heart upon. And He has set His heart upon "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

There may be still much disappointment, but if we have that which is true—in principle—to God's purpose, although not full and perfect in expression, but true in principle, and our hearts are set upon all that can possibly be of that kind, Heaven will make perfect our imperfections at last, and the perfect City will swallow up the imperfect one.

GOD NEEDS MEN

Now, I close by reminding you—and here is a very practical application of this—Nehemiah was not an official prophet, nor was he an official king, nor an official priest; he was only a man among the people. The official side of things was in much weakness. Kings had all gone wrong and failed; the priests were corrupt: even Joshua the high priest, was clothed in a filthy garment. The prophets, well, they had done their work, and were seeking to do it, but there was much weakness. But here is a *man* who is none of those officially, just a man, and he rises up to take this whole thing as the burden upon his heart, to bring God full satisfaction. My point is this, what God wants is *men*, who will take the thing on their hearts. You may not have official designations; you may not belong to the official ecclesiastical, or political class, but you can be a *man* for God; you can be a *person* who takes this on your heart. You may meet the disheartenments that Nehemiah had to encounter; you may find there is much slackness amongst the Lord's people, as he found, *but* he stands out as a man of courage, a man of faith,

and he brought the testimony as far on to recovery as ever it was brought at the end of that dispensation. If we could catch something of the meaning of this—"the joy of the Lord is your strength", it would deliver us from a great deal. That is, let me change the word, 'the pleasure of the Lord', that comes from Isaiah 53 "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand": that is only another way of saying 'the joy of the Lord'. To be in the Lord's pleasure because in line with the Lord's end, will save us from much. You see what it meant here. "Go your way"—what they might have done and said—"I have lost my appetite; I am not inclined to eat anything, or drink anything: I am going away to be miserable": 'it is all a poor look-out'!

But mark you, here it is; you are in the way of the Lord's purpose; therefore, eat the meat, drink the sweet; send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. This joy of the Lord is a great delivering thing from ourselves, and our own troubles. It turns us out to others. It releases us for service. We are no good in service if we are miserable; that is, if we are self-occupied with our own troubles, whatever they may be, spiritual or anything else. If we are turned in on ourselves, that cripples us for service. It is only when we come into line with what the Lord is after, really in line with that, the Lord's joy, the Lord's pleasure, that we are any use to anyone else. "Send portions"—great delivering from self-occupation, to be occupied with the good of others—send portions. And it is a command—"Neither be ye grieved". That is not just a kindly exhortation, a little bit of trying to stimulate us to be a little more cheerful. "Neither be ye grieved"—we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and *again I say*, Rejoice!"

T.A.S.

FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY

IV. FAITH IN RELATION TO LIFE

Reading: Romans, iv, 16 - 25.

WE are being led to see the relationship of faith to three things.

Firstly, faith in relationship to *enlargement*. We have taken note that God's thought revealed for His people is enlargement unto His own fulness. "All the fulness of God" is the word which indicates God's thought concerning His people. But every fresh movement toward enlargement, or every stage in enlargement, comes about by a fresh

challenge to faith—faith being tested in a new way as not hitherto—and by faith's triumph there is further enlargement. The Scriptures show, from beginning to end, that there is no enlargement, no increase of God, in any other way.

Secondly, we see faith in relationship to *establishment*. We have seen the thought of God to have things in a state of stability, endurance, steadfastness, trustworthiness; something substantial, something deeply rooted and grounded and immovable. God works along that line, seeking to

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

eliminate all those elements in us which are weak, unreliable, unable to carry a weight and take responsibility ; to bring us to the place where we are established in Christ. But every bit of this work of confirming, establishing, rooting and grounding is connected with some further testing or proving of faith. Every fresh storm sends our roots deeper down, to take a firmer hold. It is along the line of faith's proving that we become established. Where there is no testing or trying, no adversity, we are weak and unreliable. So we see that, right through the Scriptures, God is moving toward having things settled and fixed, after His own nature: eternal, abiding, enduring for ever. The whole Bible shows that this is brought about by faith.

In the third place, we see faith in relation to *life*. That is to be our occupation at this present time, with just a closing word on faith itself.

FAITH IN RELATION TO LIFE

I need hardly take you through the Scriptures to see how these two things go together. Much will come to mind as we proceed. I just remind you of the familiar fact that this matter of life bounds the whole Scripture. The Bible opens with the tree of life, and it closes with the tree of life, and that is the great issue from beginning to end. From one angle, as we were saying earlier, the Bible is all about this issue of life as over against death. We find, therefore, as in the case of the other two things—enlargement and establishment—that God has left us in no doubt whatever as to His mind on the matter. He has made it perfectly clear that His thought is life, and life in fulness. So much so that the Lord Jesus, in His coming into this world, reaching with one hand right back to the beginning, and with the other hand right on to the ages of the ages yet to be, declares that He is in that position on one ground and with one purpose: “I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John x. 10).

ENLARGEMENT DEPENDS UPON LIFE

Now these two things of which we have spoken—enlargement and establishment—are inseparably bound up with this matter of life.

All God's enlargements are by life. We see a parable of this in the work of creation. At the very beginning we find God filling the void, the waste, the emptiness which was the primal state of this world—we find God filling it in every realm in terms of life. His increasing fulness was along the line of life. That is a parable of God's way. In-

crease and fulness in the Christian life, in the people of God, is always in terms of life. When God adds, it is always additional life. All God's work has the issue that there is more life present than ever there was before. And so progressively, by crises and stages, God is moving with His people—where they will let Him, where they will not waver through unbelief—in the direction of His ultimate fulness on the basis of constantly increasing life.

ESTABLISHMENT DEPENDS UPON LIFE

The same is true in relation to establishment—the work of confirming, making things stable, solid, deep. This again is always in relation to life: confirming in life, making strong in life. The essential element in this life is its eternity. An increase of life is always an indication of something deeper having been done in the heart, the emergence from some state of uncertainty, some difficulty, some dark experience, in a crisis, through the victory of faith. The emergence just adds more life—that is all. It is like that every time: we find that we are experiencing and enjoying more life. Life is the basis of our becoming more settled.

There are many people who think that there are other things which lead to consolidation and establishment, to certainty and assurance. But it is not that way at all. You do not get established by more teaching, or by additional information, even about Divine things. You do not even become spiritually established by knowing your Bible better. That is not to say that you should not seek to know it better, but the real establishment is that which comes through life known in ourselves. “And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life” (I John v. 11). The testimony is not a form of teaching, an interpretation of truth, a system of doctrine, or a way of doing things. “And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life”, and to be established means to be knowing this life in constant increase.

THE ‘EVIDENCE OF GOD’ IS LIFE

We will now take a look at what we will call some of the ‘evidences of God’. Let us say at once that the inclusive evidence of God is just life. The *evidence* of God—the proof, the testimony to God, and the testimony to what is of God—is life. Let us go back to that original criterion in the symbolism of the beginning: the tree of life. It is perfectly clear that that tree of life, and what it represented and symbolized, held the whole issue

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

of whether God was going to continue with man or not, whether man was going to continue with God or not, whether their relationship was going to remain intact. The 'evidence' of God was centred there.

Now that tree evidently represented another and different life from what man already possessed. God had brought in the living things. The waters swarmed with living creatures; the air swarmed with the living fowl; the earth was full of living creatures and living vegetation. Then man had been created, into his nostrils there had been breathed the "breath of lives" (Gen. ii. 7), and he had become an animate being. He had what we all have by nature—this natural life. It was *after* the imparting of that kind of life, and man becoming a living soul, that God pointed to the tree of life, and made that the issue of life and death. It was not the life that was in man that was the issue of life and death, because man did not forfeit that life which was in him when he disobeyed. The tree evidently represented and symbolized another life than that which God had already breathed into him—a different life altogether.

DIVINE LIFE FORFEITED

Death, therefore, came to mean two things. In the first place, it came to mean a change in man as he was. Although he would continue as an animate being over a tenure of years, a change took place in him. We will not stay to analyse that change, but by disobedience he became different even in his own natural being. Secondly, he forfeited his right to this other and extra and really true life, as represented by the tree. He never inherited that, he never possessed that. It throws a little light upon John's words about the Lord Jesus, that "to as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12). You see the whole question of faith coming in relation to the right. It is the right, in other words, to this other, Divine, life, which is through being begotten of God. The right to that life was forfeited by Adam through disobedience, or unfaith. The right to that life is restored through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Now Satan said, 'Hath God said, Thou shalt surely die? Thou shalt not surely die!' What a categorical statement! Now note: Adam, apart from his known rupture in fellowship with God through his disobedience because of unbelief, probably was not conscious of what had happened. True, a frown and a shadow came over the face of God; there was no longer the light and the clear-

ness of fellowship; but man went on living. He did not there and then fall dead and perish. He went on living quite a long time, went on growing, developing, enlarging. When you see the tremendous enlargement after its kind that came from that man—his children, family, tribe, race—it looks very much as though the Devil was right. 'Thou shalt not surely die'. God was wrong, the Devil was right.

THE DELUSION OF A FALSE LIFE

But what has happened? There has entered into man a deep and terrible delusion—the illusion of a false life, in which there is a lie right at the very core. And that has surely worked itself out, and is still working itself out. There is increase of days, unto many years, it may be; there is development and enlargement, of its kind, in the matter of this world; but right at the core of it all there is bitterness and disappointment. At last, at most, emptiness, disillusionment. What has it all been for? What is it all about?

And the most dissatisfied people are always those who have the most. That is true, is it not? The people who have the most and have not the Lord are the most dissatisfied people in this world. The evidences of it are patent. As I was saying on a previous occasion, a year or two ago I was in a part of the world where the last whim and fancy is satiated to the full. Everything that the soul of man could crave or ask for seems to be available. In Southern California, you see acres and acres and miles and miles of the most wonderful fruit. I picked sackfuls of the most beautiful grapefruit and oranges that you ever saw. But my friend, on whose fruit-farm I was staying, said, 'Do you know, it is so prodigal that, in order to keep any market at all for it, tons and tons of this beautiful fruit are put into a ditch, and acid is poured over it, so that no one will get hold of it to try to make business out of it.' Poor people who might make a little out of this surplus are deprived of it in order to keep some sort of market.

And it is like that, not only in natural products, but in pleasure. The word 'Hollywood' has come to connote the very ultimate in the gratification of human desire. You can see it all there in display. But oh! the feverishness, the restlessness, the uncertainty, the anxiety! The biggest hospital in the world is there in Los Angeles, and four thousand cases are treated every day, in a country like that where every possible aid to health is available. What is it all about? It is the strain of coping with life. Out in a very beautiful suburb, I saw, as I

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

went along, house after house up for sale, or to let; and I asked my friend, 'What is the meaning of this?'; 'Oh, everybody within miles of this city is living as if they were on the edge of a volcano, over this atomic bomb business. They are all moving out, as far out as they can get, because they think that any day the atomic bomb may be dropped upon Los Angeles.' With everything conceivable to fill life, people are living in strain and tension and fear, I have not exaggerated the picture, because I could not.

I have cited this as an illustration of the truth that the more men have, the more dissatisfied they are. The more you give to this life, the more it will take—and can take—and the more it will demand, and the more unsatisfied it is. It wears out in no time. The whole thing fails to last—it just does not last; and that is the life that the Devil has given in place of this other life. You and I may have very little in this world—nothing at all comparable to a Californian set-up—and yet have the Lord Jesus in our hearts and be perfectly satisfied. The difference is a very practical thing. The Devil said, "Thou shalt not surely die", and man just swallowed it: he thought that God was wrong, and the Devil was right; and this is what it has led to—a false life, hollow at the core, never, never answering to man's real need; a mockery in the end, the fruit looking beautiful but falling from the trees before it is ripe.

But in that other life, represented by the tree of life, it is all the other way. This life has nothing to do with things at all: it has to do with a Person. This life does not wear out: it wears infinitely—it survives. It is not, like the other, kept going by artificial respiration and stimulants—and how artificial they are! This life is maintained from a living source.

That is very searching. It is very, very important to be quite sure that this thing has taken place with every new convert: that there is no illusion or delusion about this, but that they have really become, definitely and surely, the recipients of this other life—this life that will not require a constant succession of stimulants from without, but which, when all outward things cease, will still go on. That is going to be the test.

Now this illusion can get into religion, and that is the place where the Devil likes to have it more than anywhere else. The Lord had something to say on that very matter to the church at Sardis: "Thou hast a name"—a reputation—"that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Rev. iii. 1). A reputation for life—and yet dead. The eyes of flame see through the false situation—the false reputation,

the false name. It would not be difficult to imagine or portray what a church like that would be. We need not stay with it. There are many things that have a semblance of life, that look like life—what people call life—but they are not life. They require external 'stimulants' to be applied all the time to keep the thing going. What the Lord calls life is another thing altogether.

MARKS OF DIVINE LIFE

(a) FRESHNESS

One of the thoughts associated with this Divine life is newness, or freshness. "That . . . we . . . might walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). That word 'new' in our English versions has two Greek words behind it. One means something that never was before; the other carries the thought of that which is young and fresh. This Divine life is, of course, something that no one has ever possessed before, outside of Christ, but its mark, its characteristic, is its freshness—its freedom from the 'earth touch'. This earth is an accursed earth; it is in death, it is under judgment, and all that belongs to it is under judgment: if this earth touches anything, it touches it with death. This life of which we are speaking is completely free from the earth touch, and free from the touch of man as he is by nature. It is fresh, therefore, and for its freshness it demands that it shall be kept free from this earth and kept free from man's touch.

That has been the issue all the way along. The life of God comes in, and is regnant and wonderfully fresh and beautiful; and then what? Man must needs take hold of it in some way, put it into his mould, run it according to his ideas, organise it and set up machinery for it, and it is not long before the freshness has gone. It is touched with something that takes the bloom off it; in the course of time it has become old; and—perhaps I may be permitted to say this, as one who is no longer young!—God has no interest in anything that is old. God is only interested in that life in us which is of Himself, and His interest is to keep it fresh. "Even to old age . . . and even to hoar hairs", there is still freshness if the life of God is the principle upon which we are living.

Yes, but we must keep our hands off, and we must keep the earth touch away. Oh, man's terrible habit of wanting to take hold of, and run, the life of God. It has killed more works of God than anything else, brought an end to wonderful movements of the Spirit. Man has taken hold, brought things into his framework, under the control and

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

direction of his committee. Very well; the Lord withdraws, and the freshness of His life is no longer found. Freshness, newness, is the mark of God's life.

The Church is His new creation. The Church is His new cruse, to refer to Elisha and the falling fruit of the trees of Jericho because of the lack of this vital element in the water. "Bring me a new cruse", he said, "and put salt therein" (II Kings ii. 20). The waters were healed. And Pentecost is the counterpart of that. The Church is the new cruse with the life in it, to counteract all the death in this world: there is newness of life, and newness of vessel. The Lord Jesus put His finger upon this very principle when He said: "No man" (He might have added, 'much less God') "putteth new wine into old wine-skins" (Mark ii. 22). It is folly. 'If you do that, you will lose everything', He said. "No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment" (vs. 21); neither does God do that kind of thing. He must have everything new and fresh. We are citizens of the *new* Jerusalem (Rev. iii. 12, xxi. 2); and so we could go on. If you look up the words 'new' and 'newness', you will be surprised how much they cover in the New Testament. Everything is new where this life is.

(b) PRODUCTIVITY

The second feature of this life is its productivity, or productivity. That is God's method of increase. There is all the difference between putting on, adding to, accretion, from the outside, and increase from the inside. That is God's principle, the organic principle of increase and multiplication by life from within, and it really does happen that way. Life produces life, and life produces organisms after its own kind: the seed has the life in itself to reproduce, to multiply a hundredfold.

That is a testimony, but it is also a test and a challenge. If there is no increase, then there is something wrong in the matter of the life. If you and I are not bearing fruit, if we are not really in the way of increase, then we need to look to this matter of our life. For it is inevitable, it is spontaneous. If there is to be productivity, there must be life: and if there *is* life, then there is reproduction—unless, of course, we thwart the life or get across the life. If somehow or other we block up the wells, then our fruitfulness ceases.

(c) INEXHAUSTIBILITY

Further, this life is characterized by its inexhaustibility. There is no end to it, no exhausting it; it just goes on. As we have already said, it does not get old. We may get old, but that life in us

does not get old at all. It goes right on; it is inexhaustible.

(d) INCORRUPTIBILITY

And then, because it is God's life, it is incorruptible. Life is symbolized by salt in the Bible. The symbolism of the new cruse and the salt is just that of the vessel of God with the life of God in it. The presence of that life is the counter to the presence of corruption, wherever it is.

This, of course, is quite clearly seen in the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, containing the challenge and message to the churches. It was clearly a time of spiritual decay: but we would go further, and say 'of spiritual corruption'. Strong language, but justifiable. "Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel" (ii. 20); "Thou hast . . . some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel" (ii. 14). Here is corruption, and the challenge to that state of corruption in the first place is indicated by the announcement of the Lord Himself. "I am . . . the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (i. 17, 18). It is as though He were saying, 'I am measuring you by the standard of this incorruptible life, on the principle of this incorruptible, deathless, death-conquering life: I am challenging you in your corruption. The import of the message is this: 'These conditions of corruption are due to something having arrested the life. If you had the life vibrant and regnant and triumphant, there would be none of these conditions at all.'

The issue, then, for the overcoming, the setting aside, of all corruption, is that of life. The corrective for false teaching—for heterodoxy—is not orthodoxy. Let us say, changing the words: the corrective for error is life. That is what the Scriptures show. It was so with the seven churches. John, who wrote the Revelation, at about the same time also wrote his letters, and these likewise deal with falsehood, error, decline, decay, corruption, Antichrist, and all the rest—a bad state coming amongst believers; and John's great word in his letters and in the Revelation, as well as in his Gospel, is *life*. That emerges from the most elementary study of his writings.

John begins his Gospel: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (i. 4), and that is the keynote to the Gospel all through. His letters are on that note all the time. The witness (testimony) is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John v. 11, 12). At the beginning

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

of the Revelation you find: "I am . . . the Living one" (i. 17, 18); you pass on to the "four living ones" (iv. 6), and their testimony and influence; and you close the Revelation with the "tree of life" and the "river of water of life" (xxii. 1, 2). It is all about life. But that is all presented in a day of corruption. The answer to corruption is not argument, but Divine life.

(e) INTELLIGENCE: LIFE RECOGNISES LIFE

This life is something which is only appreciated and understood by those who have it. Those who do not possess it can see its effect or its fruit, but they do not understand it at all. They may say, 'Well, those people have got something that I do not know anything about: I do not understand it at all, I do not know what it is. They seem to be happy about it, but I am certainly a stranger to all that.' Or it may not affect them at all. They may come in where there is abundant life and go away unaffected. They just do not understand it or appreciate it. But those of us who have this life both appreciate and understand it. We cannot explain it to anyone else, any more than we can explain what natural life is. No one can explain what life is. But if we are spiritually alive, really spiritually alive, and we go in amongst other children of God, we sense something. It may be we feel death, a lack of life, something here that is not alive; there is some check to life here. On the other hand, we may sense the presence of life. Now, that capacity to appreciate and to understand is the guide of the Lord's people. It is a very intelligent faculty—it is, indeed, our 'intelligence', in more senses than one. Why do we say, 'Something is wrong here', because we do not sense the life; there is something that is not alive. *We* are 'alive' to the fact that something is wrong!

I believe that is exactly what Paul knew when

he found those disciples at Ephesus. They were having some wonderful Bible teaching from Apollos, who was a man mighty in the Scriptures; but Paul had to say when he came down to them: 'You have a lot of Bible teaching here, and you are professing disciples of the Lord—but what is the matter with you? There is something amiss here. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' (Acts xix. 2). The Holy Spirit in Paul, as the Spirit of life, registered here the absence of life: there was no witness of life, even with all the Bible teaching and the profession. The Spirit enabled Paul to put his finger upon the situation, and to clear it up.

LIFE THROUGH FAITH

Now, all the Lord's progress with us, as we have said, the Lord's enlarging, the Lord's establishing, is along this line of life. But this life is all governed by faith. We are thinking much of Abraham, and we have something to say about him yet. With him, every fresh movement toward enlargement and consolidation and increase of life was by way of fresh testing of faith. Everything rests upon this matter of tried and proved faith. If you and I pass, then, into a time when our faith is being sorely tried, really being put through it, let us ask the Lord to help us to adjust ourselves to this: for this is not unto death, but unto life. This is not permitted by the Lord in order to bring an end in death. This is meant by Him to bring us into larger life yet. If only we could rest in that assurance, it would rob the dark times and the difficult times of their deathliness, and make them the very ground upon which we might come into newness of life through fresh victories of faith. Faith is the way to life through trial, testing, suffering, adversity.

T. A-S.

"THE BED OF THE MAN OF GOD"

Reading: II Kings iv. 8-37; viii. 1-6.

WHEN the woman of Shunem provided a prophet's chamber for Elisha she was moved by a simple desire to care for the things of God. She little realised what the outcome would be—how amazingly the Lord would care for her. Great things for the future came out of this extension of her home to make a place for the man of God. Wherever Elisha went things always happened. Usually there was someone in trouble, and it was the man of the Spirit who provided the answer. In the home of the Shunemite, however, there were

no troubles, and no apparent need; but the rest of the story shows how greatly she was to be cast on God to prove His faithfulness.

THE PROMISE OF EXPANSION

It was Elisha's ministry of the Spirit in that home which first stirred things up and gave deliverance from the perils of complacency. It seems that the description "great woman" means that she was wealthy, since the word is so used in other places. She had all that she wanted, a kind and thoughtful husband, a comfortable home, servants

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

to minister to her and a general atmosphere of well-being in which to live. When Elisha wished to reward her for her hospitality and asked: "What is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?", she replied that she 'dwelt among her own people.' She required no help from higher quarters, for she was not only affluent but also free from all fears or threats. She appeared to have need of nothing. Yet in fact she had a very great need, and Elisha was able to bring it to light and to meet it.

It was true that she was greatly favoured: the blessings of God had flowed richly into her household; but the question was how they could flow out. There was no outlet. Her husband was old, her own life subject to severe limitation. What was the purpose of all her substance and what the prospect for it? She had so much, and yet she lacked the most vital thing. Her very wealth, instead of being a glory, was well on the way to becoming a tragedy. It is a grave peril, this—to be spiritually wealthy and satisfied, and yet to be condemned to increasing limitation, with no continuance in view. The Spirit of God can never be at rest in such a situation, and so Elisha's question broke up the complacent calm which lay on everything, bringing to light a hidden need and heartbreak. It must have once been a real distress; but perhaps it had ceased to be such now, because of the apparent hopelessness of any remedy. One of Satan's most effective weapons is that of despair. She no longer expected increase. It seemed inevitable that everything of value would die with her. So she left Elisha without asking anything of him, returning to her own room as one who had no expectations, for whom nothing more could be done.

But while Elisha rested in the prophet's chamber, Gehazi had been in closer personal touch with the family's affairs, so he now pointed out the hidden tragedy behind all the great wealth. "Verily", he said, putting his finger on the true lack, "Verily she hath no son . . ." So Elisha called her the second time, and told her that God was going to remedy her limitation. Her response was natural enough: it begged Elisha not to tantalize her with suggestions of the impossible. But is it not the very essence of the Spirit's speaking to us that He intends us to trust God for the impossible?

Spiritual enlargement always has this element of something new of God—a miracle which only He could do. As she stood at the door of that little chamber, which she herself had provided, she received this promise from the Lord: Thou shalt embrace a son." There was no atmosphere of strain in the room, no striving with fleshly energy,

no effort on the part of man. The promise came with the simple, quiet assurance which is the hallmark of life in the Spirit. As he made it, Elisha was not standing by the table, nor even sitting on the stool, but lying relaxed on his bed. The bed of the man of God! If every piece of furniture in that simple prophet's chamber set forth a spiritual principle, then the meaning of the bed was perfect rest in God: rest in the face of the challenge of the impossible. But for God, the wealth of that household would be wasted: it had no new life to exploit it, no heir to continue it. Yet Elisha could announce that God was going to make a new channel, a living channel for its values to be developed and safeguarded, even though it meant doing the impossible. The man of God did not rise from his bed; he lay quietly back glorying in the mighty power of God.

The challenge of the woman's condition is obvious. We may be spiritually wealthy and yet be shut up to ourselves. While we may consider ourselves—perhaps with justification—to have much spiritual substance, as though we had no further need of help or favours, there may be with us the secret tragedy of no outlet and no future. Of what use are our abundant riches without living succession? The Spirit challenges our whole position, as to whether it is really as good as it seems. Is it as God meant it to be? How can the wealth which He has showered on us be held if there is no living heir? Is not the meaning of His blessings very limited if they are not being passed on and spread abroad?

We may rightly feel, as the Shunemite did, that we are helpless, but, like her, we are called to expect the impossible. This new movement from God did not come from man's soul-energy, but from the utterance of faith. The prophet lay on his bed, not to slumber or to dream, but to express his utter faith in Heaven's power to end limitation.

THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

As the years went by, it seemed that the normal course of growth would make the work of expansion smooth and easy. But the mother had to prove that so often the Lord's enlargements are not gradual unfoldings, but the result of sharp crises—almost catastrophes—since they depend wholly on resurrection life. And so catastrophe came to the home at Shunem. The son suddenly died. It seemed to the stricken mother as though it would have been much better had he never been born. "Did I desire a son of my lord?" she asked Elisha. "Did I not say, Do not deceive me?" This, too, is

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

common enough—to have such a painful reaction from our proving of the Lord as to wish we had never moved out in faith with Him. It was as though she asked the prophet why he had put this into her mind. All along she had feared that it was too good to be true, and now her fears seemed to be realised.

The blow was both great and unexpected: so much so that even Elisha was surprised by it. He usually knew what the Lord was doing, and was outstanding for his insight; but on this occasion he had to confess that it was beyond him. "Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." How true it is that there are things which break in upon us that seem strange even to the most spiritual. There is no way of knowing what God is at when once we are committed to the course of spiritual expansion.

If we pause to ask why it had to be like this, why must the woman's son die, there are two simple possibilities which suggest themselves. They may explain our experiences as well as hers. The first is the need for keeping things in the realm of faith. How quickly we begin to take things for granted! God had done a miracle in that home—He had done the impossible; but if there had been no need for further miraculous help she might easily have come to regard this as an ordinary son, and, by taking things too much for granted, have lost the value of all the dependence and all the praise associated with those early days. The Lord has to allow trouble so that we are kept up-to-date with the reminder that expansion is His work and not ours. It is not automatic; it does not just happen by itself. If it begins with a faith proving of God's power it can only go on in the same way. The prophet's bed is still needed.

The second suggestion relates to man's proneness to take possession for himself of what really belongs to the Lord. This was God's boy, God's gift, but the mother might easily have become possessive, seeking to take hold of him in a wrong and selfish way. To avoid the risk of this the Lord allows us to lose even what He Himself has given us, that we may only have it back again by a new act of His grace.

The woman of Shunem showed that her faith was equal to the test; indeed she seems to have done everything right, and can therefore give us some valuable lessons. First of all she got straight back to God through His servant. She did not argue or discuss this matter, even with her husband, but acted promptly and with decision, though without yielding to any spirit of panic.

Alas! that so often, when things seem to go wrong, God's people begin to question or to lose their heads! The only answer which she would give to questioners was: "It is well", which she said in one word: "Peace". This is indeed the triumph of faith: not only to receive the gift in face of the impossible, but, when that very gift is stricken down in death, still to answer, "Peace! Peace!"

Her first action, however, brought the bed into view again, the bed of the man of God. It was on this bed that she laid the dead child. She did not put him on his own little bed; that would have been to ignore his origin. She did not put him on her bed, for that would imply that she was undertaking the responsibility instead of leaving it to the Lord. There was something sublime about the act of faith by which "she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out." We give credit to Elisha for bringing the boy back to life again, and he deserves it, but we must appreciate the importance of the mother's committal. It put everything back into God's hands, and made way for His resurrection power.

There are lessons to be learned from Gehazi's failure with his staff—lessons of warning and correction. The positive inspiration comes from Elisha's personal handling of the matter. Gehazi shows us what will not be sufficient, whereas Elisha reveals the way of effectiveness. And once again the bed comes into view. It was on this same bed of rest in God that he now had to stretch himself in earnest identification with the need. He was drawn out to the full limit of faith's exercise, for it was only when he had "embraced the child seven times" (iv. 35 R.V. mg.) that life was restored and the victory won.

THE PROVISION FOR CONTINUANCE

The sequel reveals a still more significant reason why the boy had been allowed to die. It was God's foreseeing of a future day of challenge and His provision for continuance. Even with the son alive, the Shunemmite would have been bereft of her inheritance if it had not been for the resurrection miracle. He had to die and be raised from the dead in order to ensure the full continuance of the household. It may seem a strange way to provide for future stability by letting death break in, but then God's ways often are strange to us. The fact remains that at the end of the seven years' famine she would have been cheated of all her possessions, had it not been for the timely recollection of the earlier miracle.

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

The Lord's timing is always perfect. If the woman had returned before the seven years had fully elapsed, the king would not have been ready for her appeal. It is amazing, too, to see God's providential use of an unprofitable servant. The last that had been heard of Gehazi was his dismissal in disgrace from Elisha's service. It seems that he had become a hanger-on at the royal court, a wastrel who lived on his ability to interest people with his reminiscences of Elisha. Even so, the Lord made all things work together for the good of the woman of Shunem. The story selected by the *raconteur*; the perfect timing of the woman's appearance in court; the king's command, "Re-

store all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now": all this was brought into God's plan for the safe continuance of what He had begun in the prophet's chamber. Although the bed is not mentioned in the final incident, its spiritual counterpart is most strongly stressed—namely, the complete confidence that faith may have with regard to God's care for maintaining and preserving what He has begun. The woman only had to obey, to keep steady in the time of testing, to rest back on the faithfulness of God. The Lord saw to everything else: brought about the enlargement, made it safe, and took responsibility for its continuance.

H. F.

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF TRAVAIL

THE seed plot of this series of meditations is found in a little fragment at the end of the letter to the Galatians:

"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians vi. 16).

We will put alongside of that some other passages.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah liii. 10, 11).

"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah lxvi. 8).

"Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel" (Micah v. 3).

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And . . . we ourselves groan . . . waiting for . . . adoption . . . the redemption of our body" (Romans viii. 22, 23).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall

be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world" (John xvi. 20, 21).

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you . . ." (Galatians iv. 19).

Now let us bring together particularly that phrase from Galatians vi. 16: "The Israel of God", and the fragments in Isaiah liii. 10 and 11: "He shall see his seed"; "He shall see of the travail of his soul". "His seed . . . the travail of his soul".

We have before us a very full, deep and far-reaching matter: nothing less than that of the producing, securing, training, and using of a spiritual seed—a new spiritual Israel. We begin with a brief consideration of a principle, found in a word occurring in all but one of the above passages—the principle of travail.

Let us first of all remind ourselves that this is a law which God established after the fall. There is an established law of travail. You will recall what the Lord said, first to the woman, and then to the man, as recorded in Genesis iii. 16-19. He there linked this law in two realms with production and reproduction: in one connection with children; in the other connection with the earth. And in these two connections of the law of travail we find three things.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

REPRODUCTION, AND HENCE TRAVAIL,
THE JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE

First of all, the very justification of life is in reproduction, in multiplication, in a seed. Life is never intended to be an end in itself. Its only justification, according to God's law and principle, is that it reproduces. And so the law of travail is linked with reproduction. That runs through the whole realm of grace, and through a large part of the realm of nature. But if there is no reproduction without travail, then the travail becomes the basis of the justification of existence. That is something much deeper than perhaps appears. One might put it like this, quite bluntly: If we are without travail, there is no justification for our existence. We shall come back to that later.

That was implicit in what God said to the woman. Then He turned to the man and spoke about the travail of his labour—of the ground bringing forth thorns and briars, that it would be by the sweat of his brow that the ground produced, and that this was the preservation and sustentation of life. This was the justification of life: the preservation and sustentation of life on the principle of travail.

And then, of course, in both cases the issue is a triumph. That is made perfectly clear in both connections. Paul puts his finger upon that, you remember, in his letter to Timothy (I Tim. ii. 13 - 15). Yes, travail, but triumph. God will see you through in spite of it. It is the triumph of life in both connections—the children and the earth; it issues as a testimony to something having been overcome, a victory over forces at work which would prevent or make it infinitely difficult. Travail, you see, is God's law by which He is not defeated. That is where the test comes always for us: *He* is not defeated. Out of the adversity, out of the difficulty, out of the suffering, something stands as a great testimony to triumph, to victory.

TRAVAIL IMPLIES SOMETHING COSTLY

Now note the implication of this principle of travail—and there are many connections in which the law of travail operates: just go through the Bible and see the great number of connections where struggle and conflict and pain and anguish presages the emergence of some tremendous new thing of God. But note the implication of such a law. What did God mean by it? I think simply this—and perhaps much more, but certainly this—that nothing was going to be easy and cheap. To put it another way: that God was really establish-

ing the tremendous value of everything. He was saving man from regarding things as being of little concern or value, forcing him to recognise that this thing is costly because it is valuable. Now this is the offset to the whole tendency of man's nature to get things easily and cheaply, not to pay a price for them, to escape suffering, to escape labour, to get it all without any cost. And God has written in the universe this law that anything that is of Him, whether in creation or in grace, has a price attached to it, is a costly thing; it is infinitely precious and valuable, and worth suffering for!

Note, it is intended to bring the soul in—"the travail of his *soul*"; "*My soul* is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—to bring the soul into relation with things; and when we say that we mean love. What we get cheaply and easily we do not really love. But that which costs binds our hearts to it—it becomes a matter of the heart, of love. And so by travail the soul is saved from lightness, carelessness, frivolity, cheapness, and brought to recognise that there is something here that is infinitely precious. How far-reaching is that truth and that law! What a lot of ground it covers! God is not going to let the creation off in this matter. This is the explanation of so much. And nations and peoples that just give themselves up to frivolity, to cheapness, to escapism and all that sort of thing, are on the high road to a bad time in their history. It will not be too long before they pass through some fiery ordeal, in order to bring back the preciousness and the seriousness of things.

And if this is true in the realm of nature and the world, how much it explains in the realm of God's spiritual things! Oh, the infinite tragedy of trying to make the things of God cheap and easy—even salvation, and the Christian life!—appealing always to the pleasure side of men, trying to eliminate the cost. The Lord Jesus never did that. Salvation is something of infinite cost: everything to do with salvation is infinitely precious, and there is not one fragment of all that is of God which is not of surpassing and transcendent value. It is not just going to be had willy-nilly. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). Yes, suffering is attached to anything of value, and that is particularly true of spiritual things.

At that very point, you and I need to have our minds 'converted'—we need a tremendous change of mind. Unless you recognise that, unless that has become true for you, there are some things in the Bible you cannot understand. They sound flippant,

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

garrulous; they sound as though they are just words, words, words . . . Listen: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment . . ." (II Cor. iv. 17). What are you talking about, Paul—"our light affliction"? Well, listen to his catalogue of sufferings! Listen to him as he tells us of all that he had to go through for the Gospel's sake, and read the much more that Luke tells us, that Paul never mentions personally. What that beloved servant of God went through for the Gospel's sake—! And yet he talks like this: 'Our light affliction which is but for a passing moment'. You cannot talk like that in the presence of suffering unless you have seen the infinite preciousness of that toward which God is working and bringing you. "Though now for a little while . . . ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, yet . . . ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory . . ." (I Pet. i. 6, 8). Now look at the context of that: fiery trials. You cannot get through, understand, endure the travail, unless you have some sense of the value of things.

ALL DIVINE OPERATIONS EFFECTED THROUGH TRAVAIL

(a) INITIATIONS

Now this law is carried through from nature to the purpose of God, to the Divine purpose, and is seen in the Scriptures to be the principle or law of all Divine realisations. If you look again, you will see that in all new beginnings, in all the initiations of God, this law is ever present. Everything of God emerges from some agony, from some convulsion, from some death struggle. Look at your Bible again. It is like that all the way through: without or within, some tremendous travail marks every new beginning of God. Can you put your finger upon any instance in the Bible where God began again and there was no association with the principle of travail? You will have difficulty. It is the law of birth, you see, and it relates to the spiritual world, the purpose of God, just as much as to any other realm.

(b) ENLARGEMENTS

And what is true of God's beginnings and initiations, is true of every enlargement. Whenever God sets Himself for increase, for enlargement, to get something more than that which He has already got, it seems that He plunges things anew into travail. Every Spring-time, for instance, is to see nature enlarged, growing beyond what it was before, and in its increase there is a new travail. Perhaps you will think me unduly fanciful, but you

can almost hear the trees travailling at certain times as you walk in the woods. Probably if our ears were more attuned to that realm—and there are sounds, real sounds, to which our ears are not attuned—we should hear the groaning of the creation. Paul says this: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth . . ." (Rom. viii. 22). Why? It is pent up, it is held back, it is under arrest; it is groaning for its expansion, its enlargement, its liberation.

That is a law in spiritual things. Every fresh measure of Christ, every bit of spiritual increase, is fraught with a fresh baptism into His Passion. It is as well we should recognise that, because so often we do not understand why it is that, when we ask for spiritual increase and enlargement, we immediately are plunged into a bad time. The increase comes that way, does it not? Some of us have learnt that so well that, if we say these things to the Lord, it is so to speak with our tongue in our cheek! We are very, very careful what we say to the Lord. We have learned that the way of enlargement is at cost, through fresh travail, and we cannot get away from it. Yes, there are successive baptisms into the Passion of Christ. The law of His universality is the law of His Passion. "I came to cast fire upon the earth . . . But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 49, 50). By the travail of His soul, the Passion of His Cross, the straitening was removed, the fire was scattered, and the enlargement took place. But that is equally true of the Church as of Himself. The Church has never expanded and been released without some convulsion. That is a matter of history.

(c) CONSUMMATION

Again, what is true of God's beginnings, and of God's continuations and enlargements, is true of His final consummation: that in the finality of things there will be one mighty convulsion. If you like to change the word—travail. I am not sure that the Church has not entered upon that already. It is certainly coming, and it will be, at the end, the explanation. It is true to the Word. That ultimate, final, intrinsic thing of glory and preciousness, God is going to bring out of the fiery ordeal at the end. Yes, the travail of the Church at the end will issue in the final emergence of the Church in glory and in the consummation of the Divine purpose. The Bible sees a great travail in the Church and in the creation, out of which the Kingdom in fulness will finally come. "When these things begin to come to pass . . . lift up your

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

heads; because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke xxi. 28). It means your escape, your release, your exodus, your *way out*.

TRAVAIL HAS UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE

Now this principle is, of course, comprehensively gathered up in Christ Himself and in His Cross. Christ's Cross—His Passion—is central to the whole universe, and it is central in this particular respect: it is travail through which the universe is redeemed. Yes, the heavens and the earth. The Cross of the Lord Jesus affects the whole range of things in the earth and beyond the earth. His travail is of universal significance, of infinite reach. And in every experience of true spiritual travail there is something that is of far-reaching significance and account.

Here is this one little man, Paul, thought very little of, despised, by the world both in his own day and through centuries since. A certain writer—a great man in his own eyes—calls him 'the insignificant little Jew', Paul of Tarsus. Well, that is the world's estimate of him. Here he is saying: "I fill up . . . that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24). In other words: 'I sip His cup, and, in so doing, I touch the whole Body of Christ.' It is a tremendous statement, is it not? But was it true? Has history proved that it was true?

I would like to stop here with a parenthesis on the historical side of things. Fifty years ago, the whole realm of biblical scholarship, as it is called, 'finished' Paul. They wrote him off; they decided that Paul's teaching was not Christ's, that it was in another realm altogether—it was not Christian. That was Paul finished, they thought! But somehow or another, he has had a mighty resurrection. The remarkable thing is that the whole realm of biblical scholarship is now anew giving Paul his place, seeing the immense significance of the man. It is a quite fascinating thing to follow the course of biblical interpretation, and to be able to see to-day the tremendous come-back that is taking place. Why it is, of course, we know, and they are all going to be made to know that this man, because he shared the sufferings of Christ, has a universal significance for the whole Body.

Now, while that is interesting—and I could add so much more to it—the point is this. Here is the principle: that, if you and I really do share in the spiritual travail of Christ, we are lifted out of anything that is local and small and placed right in the

universal. It is a value secured for the Body of Christ beyond anything merely earthly and parochial. That is the principle of His travail, which is placed at the centre of the universe; and to share that does mean such enlargement, such release. You see, we come back to that again: release, enlargement, expansion, fulness, reproduction—use what words you will. The law is always the law of travail.

TRAVAIL REVEALS 'HEART' OR 'HOLLOW'

The Lord allows travail—indeed, He not only allows it, but appoints it—in order to find out whether really there is a heart-relationship to His things. A few months ago, I found a tree lying at the side of the road, not far from my house. The day before, it had been upright and growing, and looking like all the other trees. It had all the leaves of profession, all the proximity of association with other trees, and outwardly it could pass off as being the real thing. But a storm came, and now it was lying there; and when I looked at it I found that it had no heart: it was a completely hollow thing—there was only a framework. That is a parable. That is what is happening, and what is going to happen, and what God will cause to happen everywhere. The travail will come—the suffering, persecution, trials, whatever it may be; and, whatever may be its form, whether it be within or without, it is going to come in order to discover whether there is a heart there for God, or whether, after all, it is hollow, it is profession, it is simply association on the outside, and not real on the inside. God must expose what is not real, and God must test everything to prove it.

But what had happened to the other trees—those that stood near the fallen one? Well, they survived the storm, and they are still standing. But is that all? Not a bit of it! The next storm that comes will probably find that it has got a little harder work to do than last time to move these. Those roots have felt the strain and they have reached down and taken a tighter hold. They have got a grip on things; they have realised that storms are realities, and that it is a matter of life and death as to whether they stand.

It is so easy, is it not, when things get difficult, to walk out, give up? How often we pray that the Lord will protect from difficulties and troubles!—but the Lord never answers prayers like that. These things come to us personally, and they come to us in our little companies—storms, shaking storms, things calculated to devastate and scatter,

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

destroy and finish what is there—and the Lord does not protect. But what is He doing? On the one side He is finding out whether there is a heart for Him, and whether there is reality in every member, or whether it is only outward show and hollow inside. On the other hand, He is seeking to bring out the expression of preciousness: that this thing is too precious to let go easily; it means far too much for us to abandon at the first onset of adversity and trial. That is the meaning of it, and it explains very much, does it not?

THE TWO 'ISRAELS'

Now this comprehends God's whole conception of a spiritual Israel. Why have we taken that fragment—"the Israel of God"? You know, Paul was almost invidious when he used that phrase. If you look at the letter to the Galatians, you will see that he is dealing with two Israels, and in that phrase he is saying that there is a true Israel and a false. I think Phillips, in his *Letters to Young Churches*, has put in a word which, while it is not in the text, is what is generally believed to give the meaning of Paul. His rendering is: 'To the true Israel of God'. That is exactly what Paul meant. There is another Israel, which Paul says is not the true one. But there are those who "walk by this rule", this measure, this standard. What standard is this? If you look at the letter you will see. "My little children, of whom I am again in travail till Christ be formed in you . . ." (iv. 19). 'As many

as walk by this measure . . . the true Israel of God.' The measure of Christ is made complete by travail. The true Israel of God is the "seed" which is "of the travail of his soul".

We see, then, that, whether we like it or not, this is an established law. We can, of course, do many things in order to avoid or get rid of the travail, but God's law means that there is something of preciousness that comes out when it is suffered for, when you suffer for it. May we never get to the place where we try to make the Christian life cheap and easy—a perpetual holiday. While there is the joy—and it should be there; while there should be the deep worship, thanksgiving and praise to God: surely the truest reality even of the joy is that it comes from deep experience through suffering. It is not the superficial, flippant, frivolous kind of Christian who really knows the Lord most. No: "We rejoice", said Paul, "in our tribulations" (Rom. v. 3). There is something precious for the Lord bound up with suffering, and you and I have to face that.

A few months ago I received, as out from China, a message given by brother Watchman Nee just before he was put in prison about four years ago. The subject of that message was—the necessity for the breaking of the vessel in order to reveal the preciousness of the treasure within. It is true. Now he is knowing it. But: "He shall see his seed . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied".

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

SWEET AND WHITE

IN Colombia, people have to suffer many trials if they obey the Gospel and follow Christ. Mr. Johnson was willing to suffer for his Lord, but he felt much sorrow and care for the young believers who were often being attacked because of their faith. Sometimes their houses were damaged, sometimes they themselves were stoned; again and again they were the objects of cruel and foolish spite on the part of those around them.

With so many cares on his mind, it was a real holiday for Mr. Johnson to be asked to visit a neighbouring sugar mill, called La Manuelita. He had often seen rough sugar made in villages in the fertile Cauca Valley, but this was different. It was an up-to-date, mechanized factory, which turned out large amounts of pure white granulated sugar.

He found that La Manuelita was a long building, and that the whole work from beginning to

end was done in the length of this single factory. At one end he saw the trucks of sugar cane being brought in from the fields, and when he finally reached the other end he saw fine white crystals coming out of a chute into sacks. The sugar did not trickle down, but came in bursts, each fall weighing exactly 100 lbs. The sack was held under the chute, the lever pulled, and—whoof!—down came the exact weight of sugar. The sack was then closed and moved on, so that another empty one could be placed under the chute to receive the next fall of 100 lbs.

This was interesting, but what gripped Mr. Johnson's attention was the in-between process from the arrival of the cane to the sending off of the fine white sugar. In the main these were three. The first was the cane-crushing, by which all the sweet juice was forced out of the stems which had been

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

gathered in from the fields. The second process took place in the cooking vats. Here the sweet juice was boiled, refined and finally brought to sugar crystals. Great care had to be taken with this work, for it was important to have just the right heat, for just the right length of time, if they were to get the best sugar. A little too hot, or a little too long, and the work would be spoiled.

Mr. Johnson could not help thinking of the fiery trials which the new converts were passing through. He was cheered to know that in their case, too, the wise Lord was watching to see that the heat was never too great or kept on too long, but was made to serve for their blessing. But it was the third process which taught him a new lesson. He had been wondering how the sugar came to be so white, for even when the cooking process was over and the grains formed, what was left was still a dirty-looking mass. The sugar was not yet clean and white, but soiled with a brown treacly moisture. How could it be cleaned and made pure white?

This is how it was done. The sugary mass was put into large tubs, which began to revolve. Round and round they went, first slowly and then faster and faster, until they were whirling at a great speed. As they spun round, a miracle seemed to happen, for the sugar got cleaner and cleaner, and whiter and whiter, until at last it was all ready for the final drying and packing. And all this had taken place simply through the giddy round-and-round whirl in the tubs.

Of course there was a secret. There always is. The manager showed Mr. Johnson that these copper tubs had numbers of tiny holes in them, holes which were big enough to let all the dregs pass through, but small enough to keep the sugar grains safely in the whirling tubs. So, as they went

round, the impurity was thrown out, while the grains of sugar were kept in and grew whiter and whiter.

Mr. Johnson realised that only great pressure on the mass of sugar could force the dregs through those little holes, and was told by the manager that the explanation is in what is called 'Centrifugal Force'. The faster the tubs went round on their centre, the greater was the power pressing the sugar outwards. It was not just throwing the sugar around which made it pure; the work was only done because the tubs with their tiny holes were spinning round on a fixed centre.

This comforted Mr. Johnson, for there was one thing he did know about the Colombian Christians, and that was that they were centred in Christ. They were being whirled around in many trials and sorrows, but so long as they had their Fixed Centre in Him, this would be God's means of making them purer and whiter for His glory. They were being driven from their homes. Some of them had to flee for their lives. They had nothing fixed on this earth. But Christ was their Fixed Centre in the midst of all the turmoil. The end of the process, through His grace, would find them sweet and white like the sugar.

Mr. Johnson went back home singing to himself the verse:

'When purified, made white, and tried,
Thy GLORY then for me!';

and when he sat down with his Bible he read of "a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes" (Revelation 7. 9).

H. F.

"HE (Paul) could not do the work that was to be done, because of Tarsus, because of Jerusalem, or because of Roman imperialism (his natural advantages). He must first know the risen Lord. That stands for evermore as the first qualification for Christian service. That was the master note in all his preaching and teaching. Secondly he must receive the Spirit's fulness. Then there must be Arabia, the desert, and quietness. The peril of

much work to-day is that of imagining that any man, immediately he has been converted, can break the bread of life, and tell out the deep things of God, and fulfil a great ministry. It may not always be Arabia as a geographical location, but God never uses for the great work of interpreting His Kingdom any man who has not been definitely called and spiritually trained."

SELECTED

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

A MESSAGE FOR THE HOUR

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL VISION

"Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint" Proverbs xxix. 18.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" Hosea iv. 6.

THE first quotation above is from the Book of Wisdom. The wisdom of that statement has been overwhelmingly proved by much history and experience. There is a sense in which this explains a vast amount of spiritual tragedy, both individual and collective. This will be explained as we proceed. But first we must define the terms.

THE TEXT—ITS INTERPRETATION AND MEANING

(a) "VISION"—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORD?

This is the word used to define and summarise the message of the Prophets: e.g. "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz".

Sometimes it was as in a trance, or dream, but this was by no means general or invariable. It certainly was not essentially a matter of ocular or objective presentation, so that the matter took visual or oral form to the senses. The "vision" came in various ways, and the method is of little account. It is what it amounted to that is important. That was

THE MESSAGE FROM THE LORD FOR THE HOUR.

We should resolve it all into that. If we have the message of the Lord *for the hour* we have what the Bible means by "Vision". If we have what the Bible calls vision, we have the message of the Lord for the hour; although the full fulfilment may reach far ahead.

It can therefore be easily seen that the absence of such a message—especially if the hour is a critical one—could have grave results. The Bible gives various instances and explanations of the absence of "vision".

Hosea iv. 6, 7 gives 'rejection' as the cause, and note the serious reaction of the Lord to this rejection.

In I Samuel iii. 1 spiritual declension is the cause.

Or it might be because of diversion and pre-occupation with things other than the supreme purpose of God.

Again, the spiritual organ of vision may be so injured by selfish interests, or sinful indulgences, or neglect, as to make seeing almost impossible.

Whatever may be the cause, the result is serious.

That leads us to

(b) "PERISH" (A.V.) "CAST OFF RESTRAINT" (R.V.)

But neither translation gives the full content. By using various words or phrases we could get nearer the meaning. 'The people let go: fall to pieces: go loose: run wild: or disintegrate.'

A good example is seen in Israel at the foot of Sinai worshipping the calf. The Lord told Moses that they had "broken loose".

It may be disconcertedness, bewilderment, consternation, distractedness, terror. Or it may be disappointment, grief, perplexity, or impatience.

The causes may be many, but the effect is disintegration. A disintegrated life or community is one that is useless and helpless; weak, defeated, and paralysed.

So much for the definition—at present.

II. THE MESSAGE

(a) If what is indicated above is true, then surely the first part of the message is that of the vital importance of there being a word from God *for the hour*.

It is essential to God's purpose that there is in critical times and ominous days a vessel with the essential message of God.

It is difficult to imagine a more grievous and tragic situation than that of there being no voice to interpret nor message to govern in a day when people are pealed, broken and bewildered.

(b) What is the essential element in 'vision', or the message from God?

It is certainly authority—the voice of authority.

We could almost paraphrase our text thus—"Where there is no voice of authority the people go to pieces".

But this authority is not in the tone or strength of voice or utterance. It is not in the force of personality, or in any human factor in itself.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

What is

THE NATURE OF AUTHORITY?

(a) It is clarity and certainty as to God's end and objective. That is a statement made. We do not intend at this point to indicate or discuss what that end is, but it will readily be seen and realised that if there is not clarity and certainty as to what God is set upon, working toward, and supremely concerned with, there most certainly lacks the essential integrating factor in life and work. For things to be ends in themselves; merely to be doing things without an all-dominating, adequate, and supremely justifying Divine purpose is to result in collapse, loss of heart, and 'going to pieces' in the day of the fiery ordeal.

(b) Then it is clarity and certainty as to God's method.

Again, without at the moment trying to indicate what God's method is, we but emphasize that God does have a method—His own appointed and designed method—of reaching His end. That end is not going to be reached either willy-nilly or by ways of man's inventing, choosing, or designing. It is just on this point that a vast amount of mis-carriage, frustration, and loss have marked so much expenditure.

To be able to indicate the boundless method of God is to have that kind of authority which, though it may be flouted or rejected meantime, will be vindicated by eventual proof.

(c) Further, it is clarity and certainty as to God's means

Does it need stressing that God has always shown Himself to be very jealous regarding the means employed for His purpose? To be clear and sure on this matter is to be where God can commit Himself, and that is always authority. While this matter of means may apply to numerous things, it is discernible in Scripture that God has His means chosen and appointed for reaching and realising His end, and that He does not normally depart from it; and never so, finally.

(d) Finally, it is clarity and certainty as to God's principles.

That the Bible is a book of principles is its supreme value and meaning. That God therefore builds and fulfils history and design on spiritual principles—never deviating from them, infringing, nor weakening as to them—is something of fundamental importance to be apprehended. The recognition or identifying of those principles, or the principle involved in any situation, is to be in a position of great strength—authority.

This was the essential nature of the authority which was so definitely felt in the case of Christ Himself. Not mystic, psychic, or merely intellectual, but a getting behind *things* as such to the principle involved. This is what is meant by spiritual discernment, and without it there is spiritual disintegration, or lack of integration, as at Corinth (see I Corinthians, chapter ii).

All this is enough, at present, to lead us to see that our text is very true and sound. We see the tremendous power of "vision" in the matter of bringing and holding together; what Paul called "standing fully assured".

III. THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE

(a) TO THE INDIVIDUAL

It is of supreme importance to the strength and steadfastness of the individual Christian's life that it is *seen* that there is a *purpose* unto which and into which we are called in Christ. This is not only a life, it is a life governed by a mighty objective.

(b) TO THE LOCAL COMPANY

For a clear, strong, and effective testimony in any location it is essential that the Church as represented there is more than a congregation, a number of individuals; but a unit, a single corporate organic entity.

For this the essential is "vision", that is, all seeing together God's purpose, and being integrated thereby.

(c) TO THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

The only hope of a bettering of the situation in the divided and therefore weakened Church as it is, is the recovery of a seeing of God's single objective, the recognition of God's essential method and means, and the discernment of His unalterable and inviolable principles.

We shall try to fill in these four features or components of authority later, but here we present what we believe to be the necessity and the nature of "vision", and must leave all who have any concern for the interests of God and of His people to seek Him the more earnestly for "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the (full) knowledge of him", 'the eyes of the understanding being enlightened'. (Ephesians i. 7).

CHRISTIANITY'S COMING ORDEAL

We close this part of our consideration by pointing to the gravity and seriousness of this

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1957

atter in the light of present trends. It is our conviction that Christianity is in the way of a serious crisis.

Our grounds for this conviction will be stated later, but both from the Bible and from present processes we feel that there is ample ground for believing that Christianity will pass into a worldwide ordeal of testing and sifting.

It is spreading rapidly from the East and, being energised by a supernatural force, with Satan's st and consummate challenge to God's Christ its all-out motif, even its instruments will not be able to stop the tiger that they have mounted. But God's Sovereignty is over all, and the issue none other than what is truly, genuinely, and intrinsically Christ, and what is—not just opposite, it—imitation, assumed.

With this ordeal pressing on so that every agency of men and institutions is proving impotent to stem it, the greatest need of our time is ministry and message that brings God's people to the presence of that all-governing purpose to which He has immovably committed Himself.

One of the perils of the hour is to mistake the significance of things. For instance, there are great angelistic movements with tens of thousands being brought together, and large numbers making profession of "accepting Christ". The peril in this for the Church is to be caught up in it as the main and most important thing in our time.

What really ought to be recognised is that at best it is a large-scale drawing attention to the fact of God and of Christ with a view to leaving the world without excuse. This is according to Scripture.

The writer was impressed with this when recently following immediately upon one such great campaign in a city in America he asked a number of Counsellors what the effect had been. The agreement of these was that of all who had signed cards—a large proportion being "decisions for Christ"—the majority were already members of churches. This is tremendously significant, and would surely imply that God is not willing to leave people in a false position. Would to God that the convenors of large Christian conventions could realise that, while "deepening of the spiritual life" is essential to preparation for the ordeal, the motive and purpose, the reason and main-spring is in God's eternal purpose, not in the Christian life itself.

A tremendous additional factor of immense effectiveness will come into such conventions if, right at their centre there is that "prophetic" ministry which—coming from "vision"—is God's message *for the hour* in relation to—not just an interpretation of "prophecy" (as of some school)—but the *spiritual* significance of the course of things!

The Lord raise up and send such messengers!
T. A.S.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A SHORT LIFE

"HERE is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never went to college. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He had no credentials but himself. He had nothing to do with the world except the naked power of his divine manhood. The tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. When he was dead, he was taken down from the cross and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, but to-day he is the centre-piece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am not far from the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, together have not affected the life of man upon earth so powerfully as has that one solitary life."

Anonymous

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during October and November, 1956.

Aberystwyth £1 10s.; Baboua, F.E.A. 6s.; Bassendean, Australia 19s. 6d.; Belfast 5s., £2; Berlin, Germany £1 14s. 2d.; Bexleyheath 10s.; Birmingham £2; Blackrock £5; Bloemendaal, Holland £2; Bradford 10s.; Brighton 8s. 4d.; Bristol 6s., 5s.; Bromley 10s.; Buckingham 10s., £1; Burnley 2s. 6d.; Burnside 4s. 6d.; Chislehurst £1; Coonoor, India 7s. 6d.; Cornwall, Canada £1; Council Bluffs, Iowa 9s.; Crosthwaite £1 13s. 7d.; Derby £1; Doncaster 3s. 8d.; Dublin 5s., 10s.; Ede, Holland £1; Edinburgh 10s., £1, £1, £1; Falkirk £2; Glasgow £1; Gravesend 5s.; Gullane £2; Haddenham £1; Hastings 3s.; Heathfield 5s.; Helston 1s.; Hong Kong £1; Hove 10s.; Hoyland 13s. 3d.; Ipswich 10s.; Kew £1 10s.; Leask, Canada 14s. 8d.; Leyland £1; Lisburn 10s.; London E.17—£1; N.W.10—1s. 10d.; S.E.6—5s.; S.E.9—10s.; S.E.12—5s.; S.E.23—5s., 10s., 10s., £2, £1, £5, £4, £3, £2, £2, £1; Lostock £1 1s.; Loughton £2; Mablethorpe 7s. 6d.; Maidstone £2; Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania £1 15s. 3d.; Nashville, Tennessee 10s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne £1; Northwood £4; Paisley 3s. 6d.; Penticton, Canada 11s.; Pietermaritzburg, South Africa 5s. 3d.; Pinelands, South Africa £1; Plymouth £1 10s.; Porthleven £1; Pretoria, South Africa £1; Purley 17s.; Reading £1; Reconwillier, Switzerland £2; Redruth £5; Ridgewood, New Jersey 10s.; Sheffield 5s.; Shirley 8s. 6d.; Somerset, Tasmania

£1 11s. 10d.; Southampton 10s.; South Croydon 5s.; South Shields 5s.; Springfield, Pennsylvania £1 15s. 3d.; Sunbury 10s.; Theydon Bois 2s. 6d.; Toronto, Canada 16s. 6d., 14s. 6d.; West Wickham £2; Whaley Bridge £3; Whitchurch 5s.; Worthing 5s., 10s. 3d., 10s., £2
 Total £110 13s. 4d.

Birmingham, Ala. \$3; Carbondale, Ill. \$10; Colombia, S.C. \$7.40, \$3; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$4; Dayton, Ohio \$10; Detroit, Mich. \$5; Elmer, N.J. \$1.90; Elmhurst, Ill. \$12; El Paso, Texas \$1; Hagerstown, Md. \$2; Hastings, Minn. \$1; Hellertown, Pa. \$1; Highland Park, Ill. \$5; Hollis, N.Y. \$5; Kansas City, Mo. \$1; La Crescenta, Cal. \$4.50; Los Angeles, Cal. \$2, \$1; Minneapolis, Minn. \$2, \$5; Monterey Park, Cal. \$5; Nashville, Tenn. \$3; Pasadena, Cal. \$1; Paradise, Cal. \$4; Philadelphia, Pa. \$5; Princeton, N.J. \$10; St. Paul, Minn. \$3; San Luis Obispo, Cal. \$1, \$1, \$1; Seattle, Wash. \$2; Watertown, Mass. \$3; Wesleyville, Pa. \$3; W. Newton, Mass. \$0.90, \$10
 Total \$139.70

Saskatoon, Sask. C.\$2; Toronto, Ont. C.\$21.50
 Total C.\$23.50

Ootacamund, India Rs.5/- Baroda, India Rs.10/-
 Total Rs.15/-

Gümligen, Switzerland Sw.Frs.8.00 Wolhusen, Switzerland Sw.Frs.100.00
 Total Sw.Frs.108.00

THE NEXT
SPECIAL GATHERINGS
 at HONOR OAK

will be held, the Lord willing, on

GOOD FRIDAY, April 19, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

SATURDAY, April 20, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, April 21, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MONDAY, April 22, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

"WITNESS AND TESTIMONY" Literature.

A large selection of Books and Booklets is available. Price list will be sent gladly upon application to:—The Editor, 13 Honor Oak Road, London, SE 23.

THE CONFERENCE CENTRE
GUEST HOUSE

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

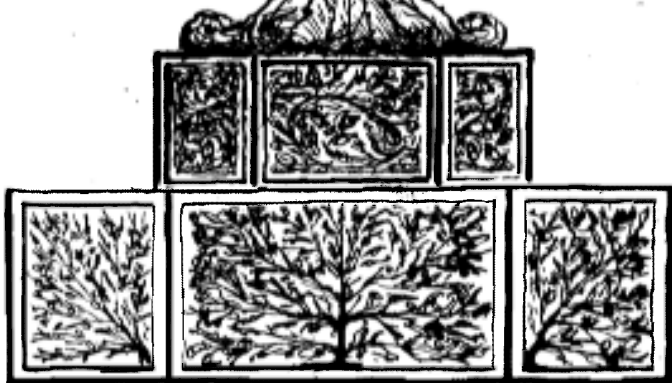
The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone : FORest Hill 4609.

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

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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



THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

Vol. 35. No. 2.

CONTENTS

FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH				
ADVERSITY (v)	...	...	25	SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE 35
A FLAME OF THE LORD	...	...	30	THE ISRAEL OF GOD (II) 40
				FOR BOYS AND GIRLS 45

FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY

V. IN RELATION TO GOD'S PRINCIPLE

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went . . . By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (Hebrews xi. 8, 17-19).

WE have so far spoken in a very general way about these matters related to faith—what God is seeking in enlargement, establishment and life. We will now go a step further, and see these things being worked out in the life and experience of His people, individually and collectively, bringing these truths into practical application and relationship to life. We shall therefore return first of all to the very practical outworking of truth in the life of Abraham. Abraham's life can be gathered up into four things: faith in relation to God's purpose, faith in relation to God's principle, faith in relation to God's patience, and faith in relation to God's passion. That comprehensive statement covers the whole course and the meaning of his life.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN CALLING ABRAHAM

We know, I think, without any further comment or explanation, what God's purpose was in calling Abraham. That is perfectly clear in the very statements that we have read from the book of Genesis. The Lord told him what He was going to do with him and through him: to make of him a great nation, and from him a multitude of nations—here was a great purpose, to have a seed according to God's own heart. Into that purpose Abraham was called. But the realisation of the Divine purpose and the calling—for you notice that that is the word that is used: "Abraham, when he was called . . ."—was along the line of many testings of faith.

THE COVENANT SIGN

I want to come particularly, at the present time, to the second of those four things—faith and God's principle. We know that, at a certain point in Abraham's relationship with God and God's dealings with him, a covenant sign was established, in the form of a rite, which was indelibly registered in his flesh and became the covenant sign for all his seed (Gen. xvii. 10 - 14, 23 - 27). That covenant sign or rite became the central meaning of Abraham's life, the very basis of all the thoughts of God

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

where he was concerned. Its significance—for it was, after all, only a sign; Paul makes it perfectly clear that this is not merely a rite, but a principle—the significance of this sign or rite gathered into it everything of God's meaning. The principle of the thing had already been at work in the life of Abraham before it was formulated into the definite act, and it continued to be applied in principle right to the end of his life—that is, from the introduction of Abram on to the platform of Divine activities. It runs, moreover, not only through his life, but through the whole history of Israel, and is then taken up in its spiritual meaning in Christianity. The spiritual significance and principle of that rite is always the basis upon which God works.

It is found here right at the beginning, then, with the introduction of Abraham into our known history: "By faith Abraham, when he was called . . ." Stephen said: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia" (Acts vii. 2); and you remember the terms of the call. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1). "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed": he went out. The principle of circumcision began to work right at that point. It was faith's basic renunciation, by which there began to be placed between the old life and relationships and an entirely new one a severance, a cutting, a separation. On the one side was the ground of judgment—Ur of the Chaldees, and all that that meant; on the other side, the ground of righteousness. This is Paul's whole argument about Abraham in his letter to the Romans. So far as God's mind was concerned, it was intended to be a distinct act of severance from the ground of judgment to the ground of righteousness.

SEPARATION FROM
COUNTRY AND KINDRED

We are told in the book of Joshua that Abraham "served other gods" beyond the Euphrates (Josh. xxiv. 2). Recent excavations in Ur have revealed a good deal about the times of Abraham, and amongst these uncoverings there have come to light the names of no fewer than five thousand gods who were worshipped at that time by the people of Chaldee in Ur. "Your fathers worshipped other gods beyond the River". "Get thee out of thy country". The significance, then, is: Come right out from every other object and form of worship, right out from anything and everything that shares the ground with God, right out from all

that which disputes the rights of God—that is, from all the ground which lies under judgment.

Idolatry is a principle, not a form. When we speak about idolatry, there is usually conjured up in our minds some form of idols which the heathen worship, to which they bow down, or the ikons and images of a false 'Christian' system—paganism and heathenism of any kind, wherever it is found. But idolatry is a far, far bigger thing than that. If there were five thousand gods in Ur of the Chaldees, there are five hundred thousand in the world. They are everywhere. They are in your heart and in mine—that which challenges God's ground, that which disputes the rights of God, that which shares between God and something else. That is idolatry. I repeat: it is a principle, not just a form. The principle of circumcision is so much bigger than the rite. That is what the New Testament seeks to make clear. This thing is so much more than a rite in the body: this is something that ranges the whole realm of the flesh, the natural man. "Get thee out of thy country". This is thorough-going, drastic, tremendous; it leaves nothing outside.

"From thy kindred, and from thy father's house". Well, Abram started out from his country, as we know; but instead of fulfilling the whole commandment, he took his kindred and his father's house with him, and so the journey was arrested. The fact is that they moved to Haran, which was still in Chaldea, and so still under the government of these gods. They were even yet in the old territory, on the ground of judgment, still in the place where God's rights were challenged and disputed. And so God said, 'We cannot go any further while there is anything of that left.' And the move never came until Abram's father died.

Now, this may represent many things, but for the present I want to indicate that this means that we are not only called upon in an objective way to leave the world. The world has got to leave us. You can take a certain position in an outward way in relation to Christianity, but you may have carried it all with you in your heart. That is what Israel did in the wilderness. They left Egypt, but Egypt did not leave them: Egypt was still in their hearts, and they were constantly harking back to Egypt. This has got to become no mechanical profession, no association and attachment in an outward way to the things of God. This must be a matter of the heart. The father's house, the kindred—the sentimental associations, the affectional relationships, the deep-down hereditary connections—these have to be severed. It has got to be a fundamental and drastic renunciation. "Out of thy country . . . from thy kindred . . . from thy

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

father's house, unto the land that I will show thee”.

ABRAHAM IN THE LAND

So, when his father was dead, he moved. But he still took some of his kindred with him who, until that connection was finally severed, were a constant nuisance to him. There were Lot and his family. However, he did move into the land. Yet here he is moving up and down in the land and not possessing one foot of it, dwelling in tents; he is in the land, but with no possession.

A DEEP WORK OF THE CROSS

Why? I think for two reasons. On the one hand, something had still to be done in Abraham; but, on the other hand, the land itself was full of idolatry. So that on the one side there was the idolatry of Chaldea, on the other side the idolatry of Canaan: and in between a wait, a long wait, before his seed could possess the land. You see, God is not realising His full purpose while there is any idolatry at all on the right hand or on the left. God is establishing and standing by his irrevocable position: 'I am going to be all or nothing. Whether it be Ur of the Chaldees or whether it be the land of Canaan, I am not going to share with anybody. And so, Abraham, I have got to bring you to the place where I am your all, and you have nothing else, before we can realise our full purpose'.

That is the principle of circumcision—of the rite of the covenant. It is the registration of a very, very drastic work of God. Paul says that it is a type of the Cross of the Lord Jesus. He puts the two together, and says quite clearly that the circumcision of the Old Testament was only a symbol of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, by which this very utter separation is made, between all the ground where God's rights are challenged or disputed, and the ground where God is all.

Now you notice that the process and the progress of this application of a principle was from without to within, and ever more deeply within. From without: "thy country". That may be very much outward, and yet it is a very real thing. Unfortunately we still sometimes have to use a phrase which is a contradiction in terms—and a very, very terrible phrase it is, when you think of it in the light of the Cross of the Lord Jesus—'worldly Christians'. That is a contradiction in terms. From God's standpoint there is no such thing as a 'worldly Christian', or a 'worldly church'. And yet, in some form or other, this idolatry that is in

the world may be associated with Christians, and Christians associated with it. Perhaps the best way in which I can speak of it without going into details is this. You notice that when the Holy Spirit is allowed to work in a life on the principle of the Cross of the Lord Jesus—that is, our death and burial with Him and our resurrection with Him to newness of life—when He is allowed to apply the principle of the Cross, you see all sorts of things beginning to happen spontaneously in the lives concerned. As time goes on and they are seeking to follow the Lord, you notice that they are changing certain things, of which at the beginning they seemed to be hardly conscious, or are dropping them. These people say, 'The Lord has shown me that He is not pleased with this, does not agree with that.' The ground that lies under judgment is coming under the Holy Spirit's conviction.

Now, as we have said, this process starts on the outside. But do not think that you have got a long way on when you begin to do that sort of thing! That is only the beginning; that is only leaving your country. There is a lot more to be done yet: but you will not get any further until that is done. It has got to be done. You may hold the Lord up on some little matter like that; perhaps a matter of dress—perhaps a matter of 'make-believe'. It is not a very advanced point when you begin to deal with things like that; it is quite elementary. But do not do anything just because someone says you should—that is legalism. Ask the Lord that His Spirit may work in your heart on the principle of the Cross of the Lord Jesus. You will find that the Holy Spirit will be quietly singling things out, and there will be changes.

But that is only leaving your country. The Lord is working from the outward to the inward, getting closer and closer to the heart. He is going to press this thing more and more inwardly. From "thy country" to "thy kindred"—that is getting closer, is it not? Those affectional relationships to which we cling. I am not going to dwell on this, but many a life has been held up by clinging to, and many another life has found its complete release by dealing with, some affectional relationship. Oh, the tragedies of unequal marriages of Christians—all because of an unwillingness, at a certain point, before the covenant was entered into, to face this whole matter of common ground in the Lord. On the other hand, when the knife of circumcision is applied to something in that realm, to some relationship which is not on the common ground of Christ, yet very near to the heart, how wonderful has been the release that has come, even in the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

midst of great suffering. But everything is held up until it is done. That was the point with Abraham's hold-up: the whole purpose of God was held up too. This is applying principles in a practical way.

So the Lord goes on with His servant; and in the next phase he is in the land. He is in the land—but with no possession, and this represents a still more inward movement of the knife. Was there some mixture in the heart of Abraham? It is not for us to say that there was, to judge him; but, from certain things that arise, to which I shall refer in a moment, I wonder—was there, after all, in his heart some mixture of ambition in relation to the Divine call? “. . . Unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation . . . and make thy name great”. Did the thought enter his heart: ‘I would like to be a great nation, I would like to be something great’? I am not charging Abraham with anything, but in a moment, in the next step, you will see that there may be some justification for raising a question like this. In any case, there could have been just some personal interest, some thought of self-realisation, associated with his act of obedience.

Now, whether it was true in Abraham's case or not, you know there does come into our relationship with the things of God a good deal of personal interest. What pathetic stories can be told of the tragedy of *ambition* in the realm of the things of God. I have recently had very close and painful association with such a case: one who went into what is called ‘the ministry’, married a wife who was tremendously ambitious for her husband and did everything to push him forward, and he became actuated and obsessed by this idea of getting on. Now, that man started with a real sense of Divine things. He was closely associated with Oswald Chambers in the heyday of his ministry, and we together had much fellowship in the things of the Lord. And then, by this ambition of his wife and himself, he got on and got on. He got to the very top in one of the biggest of the denominations, and was granted a very high honour in a degree from a well-known university for his work. To-day, now that he has got it all, that man has no assurance of salvation. He is a complete wreck—mentally, physically and spiritually. I have spent long and terrible hours trying to help him, trying to get his faith on to its feet, to believe God at all.

That is ambition in the realm of the things of God. You may say that I have given an extreme case: but you see it started in quite a simple way at a certain point—some opportunity of an advantage in the realm of God's things—and that led to the next step. Now, God is going to have none of

that in relation to His full purpose. Let us be before God about ambition: it can be a terrible, terrible snare. In the end, it can mean the frustration of all that God ever intended in our lives. Let us remember that Christ “made himself of no reputation” (Phil. ii, 7, A.V.).

Was Abraham's long waiting, between the two worlds, so to speak—the world of the past and the world of the promise—this marching up and down, this living in tents—was it God's way of pressing the principle of circumcision deeper still, in regard to this matter of dividedness of heart, really to sever the last remaining ties, to shatter the last fragments of personal interest? If that is true, it goes very deep, does it not? Take the matter of patience. If there is one thing that will slay anything like ambition more thoroughly than anything else, it is being kept waiting. There is nothing that disciplines our motives more than to be kept in suspense, to be made to know how impatient we are, and how much patience we need. Abraham had to be brought into oneness with God's patience. The sword was thereby entering his soul and searching out all this personal interest.

Now, in order that you may see that I am not altogether imputing something wrong to Abraham, we come to his supreme crisis—that of Isaac. Isaac became the point at which the sword entered most deeply. “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac . . . and offer him . . .” (Gen. xxii. 2). Can anything be more inward than that? No; God has driven the thing right to its innermost point now. But why? What is the explanation? We know that in principle and in figure God is bringing this man into fellowship with Himself in His own passion, the offering of His own well-beloved and only Son. Yes, but there is another factor. Do you remember, when the Lord one day was speaking to Abraham, what Abraham said to the Lord? In effect he said, ‘Yes, that is all very well—but what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and that which is born in my house is not my child?’ (Gen. xv. 2, 3). ‘What wilt thou give me?’ God gave him Isaac, but even so this element of ‘give me’ had got to be destroyed—God had to root out the ‘me’. And so Abraham was called upon to give back to God, to have the last fragment of ‘me’ eliminated; and then he got Isaac back, and there was no ‘me’ in it at all.

Now, I think we see what God wants, what God is after. Where are we? It may be that there is one reading this word who has not yet made the first response to the call to leave that which corresponds to their country. You are still on the ground where God has not got His place in your life, where other

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

lords have dominion, where the principle of idolatry is in some way at work, keeping you from responding to the Divine call. Let me say this to you, that that to which God calls you is nothing less than the great, vast purpose of God in Christ. You are not called just to be a Christian. You are not called just to say 'I accept Christ as my Saviour', and to do what other people called Christians do. You are called with a great, an immense calling, which is only commenced in time and reaches to and spreads over all the ages of the ages to come. That is the calling with which you are called.

Abraham, while he emerged at last, in his life here on earth, into that of which I am speaking, is but a figure of that. When God said to Abraham, 'Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude', and spoke to him of 'the land which I will give thee', it had its literal fulfilment; but it is only a figure. It is a type, as the New Testament shows, of something very much more than that. Its full realisation is in Christ—so the Apostle Paul makes clear. We are called in Christ to the realisation of a great, eternal purpose; but nothing is possible until we have made that first response to the call: "Get thee out of thy country".

It may be that you who read have made that response. You are no longer in the world, in that sense. You have made a gesture, a movement, and gone so far with the Lord, and unen stopped—perhaps because there is still something from which you are not prepared to separate. So we could take it, stage by stage, right up to the final application.

But, taking it altogether, my point is this. *Have any of us stopped short?* Have we really made this fundamental and complete renunciation? You see, there is more in this than appears. The Lord Jesus said a drastic thing: "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 33). 'Renounceth all that he hath'—why? You see, dear friends, if there is anything less than that, it is giving Satan a foothold in our lives. It is dividing things with God. It is in effect saying, 'The Lord is not all'. Until it is 'No one else and nothing else but the Lord', it is a hazardous Christian life—our Christian life is in jeopardy. The Lord says, 'For your own safety, for your own eternal future, and for the realisation of My purpose, I must just be *all*. You must have no gods beside Me; you must have nothing that divides the ground with Me at all'. Listen to Paul, whom we have already quoted: "... as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. For to me to live is

Christ . . ." (Phil. i. 20, 21). The principle of circumcision is just this—that God has all the ground, and there is nothing else there to dispute it with Him.

AN ACT OF FAITH

To give God that ground calls for an act of faith. "By faith Abraham . . ." God is not going to give you anything that will undercut faith. He will say, 'Look here, I am telling you nothing about it.' It will be 'into a land which I will show you'. Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. xi. 8). God had not given him a rosy painting. Up to that time, God had not defined or described the inheritance. He simply said, 'I will show you: you go on—I will show you. When you have taken the step, I will show you'. In the meantime, it was not knowing, not knowing, not knowing—that principle of faith. His attitude was: 'I believe that, God having called me, God knows that it is worth-while to call me to make such a renunciation, and that is all I want to know.'

God does not do this sort of thing to get us into a trap, to deceive us, to rob us of anything, to take anything away, to lessen our lives. God does this sort of thing because He is the God of Purpose that He is, whose aim and end is fulness. That is all I want to know. This is faith in God—faith that believes that, whatever the step means, God means more. "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed . . . went out, not knowing . . ."; but faith was this—'God has called me, and I believe that God never calls without some real justifying purpose.' If it costs, the compensation must be far greater; it must be, because God is what He is.

I ask you: Have all your gods of Chaldea been gods like that? Have they really 'filled your bill'? Have they really satisfied you? In holding on to that someone, or to those some things, do you find real contentment? If you are honest, you will have to say 'No'.

Let us, then, hasten to the point where we say, 'The Lord only! By God's grace, it is going to be the Lord only. It is not going to be a move just so far, and another move just so far, and then stop. It is going to be, by the grace of God, all the way—right to God's end, with no reserve; the Lord all.' Let Him make that real. As I have said, if God ever says a thing, you can believe that there is a great deal more behind it than appears in what He says. We should look at the Bible like this. If we find in the Bible a statement or a requirement, a command or an exhortation, where on the face of it it just says that a certain thing is to be done, or

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

something else not done, we should never stop there. We should say, Why? or, Why not? What has God got in His mind when He says that? God is not just giving out platitudes, little rules and regulations for our life. Behind everything He says, God has got His full knowledge of the immensity of it all. There is such an immense reason behind the least thing that God says. It is as big as God

Himself. So we need to enquire—What is behind this? We need to ask, in a spirit, not of questioning, but of seeking to understand: Why should I do this? Why should I not do that? There is a big answer to that 'Why?' You may take it that, if God calls, the reason for it is as big as Himself—something that you will never compass.

T. A-S.

A FLAME OF THE LORD

Reading: 1 Kings xviii. 25 - 38.

WHEN the fire of the Lord fell at Mount Carmel, it marked one of the great turning-points in the history of God's people. Elijah's great jealousy for the Lord's Name among His people had arrested their decline and turned their hearts back again. The Holy Spirit takes care in the New Testament to remind us that Elijah, outstanding figure that he was, must not be considered as so towering above the rest of us, and so remote from us, that we dissociate ourselves from his example. Far from it. We are assured that he was a man of like nature with us (James v. 17). This means that we are right to put ourselves into this story, and allow its full challenge to be applied to us—for it is indeed a challenge. Who of us would dare to pour on water when we were needing Heaven to send down fire? But the whole story will reveal a far greater challenge than this.

THE FLAME OF INITIATIVE

It is important to notice that faith takes and holds the initiative. God is not on the defensive, nor should His servants be. It was not that Satan had manœuvred Elijah into having to produce the fire, for the prophet had seen the terrible falling away of Israel and had himself taken up the challenge in the Name of the Lord.

Even during the years when Elijah was in hiding, he had the initiative. In this he seems to stand in contrast to others who were seeking to serve the Lord at the same time. Obadjah, who somehow managed to be true to the Lord and yet to work in the court of Ahab, was able, in secret ways and by subterfuges—no doubt at real risk to his own life—to hide a hundred men of the Lord's prophet's by fifty in a cave, and to feed them with bread and water (1 Kings xviii, 4). What a difference, though, between their hiding and that of Elijah! They were in hiding to keep themselves alive in an evil day, while they waited for the storm to pass. This was fair enough, reasonable enough, but it could not

compare with Elijah, who was hiding because he himself had precipitated a situation of drought, and was only waiting God's time to take the next move. In spite of being in hiding Elijah was at the forefront of a spiritual movement.

Elijah had found that to be really jealous for the Lord made it impossible for him to withdraw into his shell, to keep his own quiet walk with the Lord and let the spiritual condition of the rest of the people take what course it would. He found that his jealousy made him take responsibility. He was only one man, yet even one lonely man can take responsibility for the Lord's interests, and he will find that the Lord will be with him. The downgrade departure from the Lord among Israel at this time was so great and so rapid that things must have seemed hopeless. No doubt the hundred prophets in hiding—and indeed the rest of the seven thousand faithful believers, wherever they were—must have regarded them as such. They would be grieved at the state of affairs, and feel what a pity it was, but clearly they were not prepared to do anything about it. We cannot say that they had no faith, but they certainly did not have the kind of faith which we are now considering—the faith that burns like a flame in its jealousy for God's purpose in His people.

Israel was intended to be a people among whom God dwelt. Elijah's prayer showed that he was standing for this: "Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel" (v. 36). This is what the people of God are for; this is the purpose for which they have been gathered out and gathered together: that the presence and glory of the Lord might be known among them and through them. If this is not so, then they have no meaning. In Elijah's day this was the tragic truth. They had ceased to count for anything; they had lost their testimony; the glory of the Lord had been crowded out, driven out from among them. Elijah's faith made him stand for recovery. He insisted that God must come into His own again among His people. It may be helpful to consider something of their tragic departure from the will

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

of God; and it so happens that the three main features all commence with the same initial letter. They are referred to at the close of chapter xvi: Jeroboam, Jezebel and Jericho.

THE WAY OF JEROBOAM

Ahab walked "in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (xvi. 31). By this time there had been quite a succession of kings in Israel, and almost without exception they are described as walking "in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities" (xvi. 26).

Now Jeroboam, in his beginnings, was marked out by Solomon as an able and devoted leader (xi. 28). Moreover he was later informed by the prophet that the Lord was entrusting him with the kingdom (xi. 31, 35). As events developed, the Lord let the kingdom be divided and took the ten tribes away from Rehoboam, that they might be governed by Jeroboam (xii. 20). So far so good. No sooner had he received this trust, however, than he embarked on a course which led the people away from God. Not, let it be observed, because he was a man of low morals or deliberate ungodliness—not that at all. No, his fault was the very common one of substituting reason for revelation.

God, who had given him the kingdom, had also ordained that Jerusalem should be the central place of worship. Quite excusably from a human point of view, Jeroboam felt that it was dangerous for the people to have Judah's capital as their centre, so he set up his own places of worship in Bethel and in Dan. From then on he began a series of departures from the expressed mind of God, all plausible enough, but fatal in their outworking. He thought, as many have since, that a spiritual relationship with God was not sufficient, but that the people needed what was visible and earthly, so he made the golden calves. It was not convenient, and perhaps not politic, for him to have the divinely appointed priesthood, so "he made priests from among all the people, which were not of the sons of Levi". He did not keep to the feast days which God had chosen, but made a new one "even in the month which he had devised of his own heart" (See I Kings xii. 28 - 33).

We are so familiar with this sort of thing that we can almost hear the arguments he used—that it was not possible to obey the Word of God, that things were different, that times had changed, that obvious perils must be dealt with by these human safeguards. And so all kinds of ideas and innova-

tions were brought in, man-made and man-glorifying, not by one who was in open revolt against the Word of God, but by one who revered it when it suited him, and altered it or brought in something of his own when it did not. This goes to the root of Israel's declension, and it explains much of the spiritual powerlessness of to-day. It involves the substitution of reason for revelation.

THE RULE OF JEZEBEL

Ahab "took to wife Jezebel . . . and went and served Baal, and worshipped him" (xvi. 31). This represents the substitution of compromise for separation. Ahab's sin was not of the reason but of the heart. Instead of keeping his kingdom true to God, he allowed this evil influence to have a place because of his disloyal affections. Doubtless he did not intend to let it dominate him—compromisers never do—but before long the evil companion had become the ruling partner in their unholy alliance. When the Lord's people compromise with the world, they never intend to be conquered by it; indeed, the usual expectation is to influence it for good, to serve the Lord's interests by this departure from the too rigid or straight-laced separation of the past. Did Ahab reason like this? Did he really expect to fit Jezebel into a place in God's kingdom? We do not know. We do know, however, that by Elijah's time it was she who wielded all the influence. The real reason why the prophet later almost despaired was that royal orders were still being issued not by Ahab but by Jezebel. The compromising element always takes charge in the end. The one who yields on the matter of separation will finish by finding himself a virtual slave. What a disgraceful state of affairs was this, that the prophets of false worship were actually sustained by the court and given a place of honour there! ". . . the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty . . . which eat at Jezebel's table" (xviii. 19). No wonder that the faithful prophets were hiding for their lives! No wonder that Elijah felt himself to be absolutely alone in his stand for the Lord! The more honour to him, then, that he determined, even if he were alone, never to accept Jezebel.

It is as well to notice here how utterly futile are those ideas about 'influencing' the world or getting good results from compromise. Concerning Jezebel the risen Christ said: "And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent . . ." (Rev. ii. 21). Even Ahab repented. No doubt to Elijah's surprise, he "fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (I Kings xxi. 27).

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Jezebel, however, could not and would not repent. She was incorrigible. And so is the world. For that reason it lies under judgment, and must never be compromised with.

THE REBUILDING OF JERICHO

Which brings us to the matter of Jericho. "In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho." This rebuilding was done in defiance of Divine judgment, and Hiel had to pay a heavy price for it, as Joshua long before had said he would (Josh. vi. 26). "He laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub" (I Kings xvi. 34). God's principles do not lose their power with the passage of time. In the case of Jericho a solemn curse had been pronounced, so that to rebuild was to defy Heaven. This, then, was a further feature of Israel's declension during Ahab's reign. It was an illustration, surely, of Paul's words: "For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor" (Gal. ii. 18).

In the Cross, God said, even more emphatically than He said about Jericho, that there is a realm of human life which He has placed under a solemn and lasting curse. It has been destroyed, and it must never be built again. Our "old man" is corrupt; it has been judged; we must accept this sentence against the "old man" and put it off. This is the true message of the Cross: the message which tells us, not only that we may look and live, but also that we must know union with Christ in His death if we are to know the power of His resurrection life. There are always people of God who find this too severe. They want to give some place to the "old man", to spare and rebuild what God has commanded us to repudiate. This can only be done at the cost of spiritual life: this kind of thing only helps to bring God's people into weakness and defeat.

It is not difficult to see the close comparison between Elijah's day and our own. This is not merely an ancient story of a man who prayed down fire from Heaven, but an abiding message concerning those who will burn in holy jealousy for the Lord. Elijah loved the people of God, so that when he found to his distress that they were being governed by human reason like that of Jeroboam, by corrupt compromise with Jezebel, and by the fleshly energy associated with a rebuilt Jericho, he felt impelled to make a stand for the honour of the Lord's Name, and to have the heart of the people turned back again.

THE FLAME OF FAITH

If our imagination can capture the moment when all the frenzy of the devil-driven mob was hushed into silence, as one solitary figure stood forth and prayed a simple prayer which is contained in less than two verses of Scripture, we may realise what it means to be a man of faith. Perhaps we can be helped to appreciate the true nature of his prayer if we contrast it with those that the Baalites had been praying all day long. They were, of course, praying to the wrong god, but they were also praying in a wrong manner; their approach was wrong, their basis was wrong, and they had wrong motives. Leaving aside for the moment the fact that they were praying to Baal, we may find between them and Elijah two wholly contrasting methods of engaging in prayer.

IMPURITY OF SELF EFFORT

Theirs were self-conscious prayers. They knew nothing of the one to whom they were praying—Elijah taunted them with this—so that for them everything depended on the human element. They regarded one another, they vied with one another; they had no awareness of a Being to whom they could direct requests, but were trying to bring something to pass by the mere fact of their praying. Their idea was that prayer changes things. It does not. Only God can do the changing, and He will do it in answer to prayer. Nor do great numbers affect the issue. "Ye are many", said Elijah, and they were. Doubtless they felt a good deal happier for this very reason. Naturally we feel better when we are together in a crowd. If for a moment Elijah had taken his eyes off the Lord, he would have been overwhelmed by this great superiority of numbers. In his case there were not even the "two or three" of whom Christ spoke. He stood alone. Faith can never survive if it becomes self-conscious.

Their prayers were also full of self-effort. All the crying and shouting, the gesticulating and leaping, and finally the slashing of themselves with knives, was their way of trying to bring the fire down, yet "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded" (I Kings xviii. 29). If prayer can be made successful by the zeal and energy of those who pray, by the time spent or by the painfulness of the effort, then theirs would have been mighty prayer. But it was nothing of the sort. They took the whole day, and Elijah let them have it, for he knew that all this concentration of carnal effort, with its long hours of sweat-

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

ing and shrieking, could have no effect whatever.

Furthermore their prayers were full of self-interest. They were not crying for the honour of their god—such as he was. They were certainly not concerned for the good of the people. It was their own position which mattered. “O Baal, answer”, was all they could cry, clamouring for that which would meet their own need and minister to their own importance. How different was the spirit of Elijah! The kind of heart which lay behind the prayer was revealed when, after his deep despair under the juniper tree, he was sent to Horeb to know how things would work out. God’s answer to his enquiry about the fruit of all his sufferings and prayer was a strange one. “Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room” (xix. 16). Though strange, it completely satisfied him. “Elisha . . . in thy room.” The work was to be handed over to another. This was quite all right for Elijah. His objective in prayer was not self-advancement but the glory of the Lord. So long as the work was to go on—even if it was through another and not through him—Elijah was full of thankfulness for answered prayer.

THE PURITY OF FAITH

Thus we have an example of false praying: it is full of self-consciousness, of self-effort and of self-interest. There is no answer from Heaven to that kind of prayer. When, however, there is true faith—that is, pure faith—then the answer is mighty.

We notice the simplicity of Elijah’s request. “O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Lord, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again” (xviii. 36, 37). There is only One Person whose prayers can be compared with this for depth and simplicity, and that is the Lord Jesus Himself. With Him the utterances were so brief and simple, and yet so mighty in effect. It is true that on one solemn occasion He prayed three times, using the same words, but with Him there was never any excess of wordiness or mere repetition. The explanation is to be sought, not in the words used, but in the life behind the prayer.

In this matter Elijah differed greatly from his opponents. He knew his God. The simple request which he now made was the climax to a long walk with God and “stand” before Him (xvii. 1; xviii. 15). It was the final appeal of one who had come to

know God for himself, to prove His faithfulness and to be assured of His will. It was really hardly request, but the utterance of faith which emerged from intimate communion with his Lord.

It was, moreover, costly prayer. He had not cut his body with knife or lance, but he had been cut to the soul by a deep experience of crucifixion. To the superficial observer it may seem easy to pray such a simple prayer, but the only man who can pray like that is the one who has first suffered as Elijah did.

Think of his dependence. First of all at the brook, and then at the widow’s home, he was left with no reserves and no resources, being made to depend on the Lord’s provision from day to day, and almost from hour to hour. The man who stood before the crowd on Carmel, invested with such authority, had a history of childlike dependence on his Lord. And there can be no spiritual ruling, no real authority in the face of the enemy, unless there has first been this experience of utter dependence on God. It may sound romantic to live by faith, and indeed it is, for God’s ways are very wonderful; but how wrong we are to limit our thoughts to finance. This is the basis of life for every realm of our walk, whether it be circumstances, guidance, physical strength, spiritual food or spiritual ministry. It means to have nothing to fall back on, nothing to rely on—only God.

So far as we know, Elijah was not told that his presence would be a blessing in the house of the widow of Zarephath, though it is clear from Luke’s Gospel (iv. 25, 26) that actually his stay in her home was the gracious provision of the Lord for her need. God always does more than one thing at a time. All that Elijah knew was that he was passing from one sphere of dependence to another, even more trying to the flesh. There is probably no more rugged and independent type of man in all Scripture than Elijah. We have only to hear him mocking Baal’s prophets, and seeming to enjoy doing so, to know the sort of man he was. It seems certain, then, that for him to have to appeal to the widow for help must have meant bitter suffering and humiliation.

Then again, think of the trouble brought about by his faithfulness to the Lord. When Ahab met him he addressed him as the “troubler of Israel”. Elijah repudiated this; yet in a certain sense it did seem to be so. His zeal for God stirred up trouble—it could not be otherwise. He did not want it to be so, for he loved God’s people, and so it must have been a further trial when it happened. There seems to be a hint of his pain over this matter in his prayer concerning the death of the widow’s

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

son: "O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn?" "Does this thing follow me wherever I go? Must I always be bringing trouble?" Elijah did not need to gash himself with a knife, but his heart had many a wound and scar, for only by inner crucifixion can a man have power with God and prevail.

THE FLAME OF IDENTIFICATION

Elijah was a truly separated man: he had to be, if he was to help the rest. Yet we must observe how careful he was to identify himself with the people of God. His first words were to the crowds, when he called them to come near to him. He had kept himself pure from the compromise in which they were all so deeply involved, yet there was no suggestion of superiority or of desire to keep them at a distance. They had stood away from the prophets of Baal, as it were, watching a spectacle from a distance. Elijah was not there to be a spectacle, so he called: "Come near unto me". Ahab seems to have been present, but even he was included in the invitation. The man of faith will be distinctive but he must not be exclusive.

The twelve stones of the altar—"according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name"—give further proof of his identification with all the Lord's people. Israel is a whole. Now it is true that the purposes of God could often only be fulfilled in a remnant of the whole, but that was a matter which had to be left with the Lord. It was Elijah's business—and it must be ours—for the sake of the Lord's Name to keep in view the whole people of God.

The timing of the moment for his intervention further stressed the feature of identification. It was no accident. The Baalites could have the rest of the day; all Elijah wanted was the hour of the evening oblation. Throughout the history of Israel, in addition to all the other sacrifices, a lamb was offered in the morning and in the evening of every day. This people lived in fellowship with God on the basis of the burnt offering of the lamb. At that very moment, far, far away in distant Jerusalem, a lamb was being offered, and Elijah based all his claims on God on the sacrifice of that lamb. He got behind the division of the kingdom, behind the false worship of Jeroboam, back to the original basis of the people's redemption, claiming that God could still accept them righteously because of the lamb. For him, as for us, it was God's altar which really mattered. At that moment, and on that basis, the fire of the Lord fell.

THE FLAME OF RESURRECTION

We now come to the last important feature of this story: the pouring on of the water. With Jericho the rebuilders were working for resuscitation, dragging back to life something that ought to have been dead, God's alternative, and the proof of His power, is that death should really take place and then be followed by what He alone can give—the energy of resurrection life. For this reason Elijah ordered the twelve barrels of water to be thrown on the sacrifice. Whether this twelve was connected with the twelve stones, we are not told; but it at least suggests something very thorough. Even that was not enough, though, for still "he filled the trench also with water". It had the full content of quenching and then something over. What does this mean? It clearly shows that Elijah was really making things harder for God. After all this water, it must be God or nothing.

That was Elijah's true position. He wanted it to be either of the Lord or not at all. This was not only for the people to witness; it meant something vital to his own position with God. He did not want an accident, even a helpful or timely one, and therefore he so to speak saturated the thing with the impossible, so that it could not be unless God alone did it. He did not try to keep it warm. He did not even try to keep it dry. He poured on water, and more water—not in reckless folly but in calculated faith. Can we, dare we, follow his example? Are we prepared to say that if the thing is not of God we do not want it?

Further, Elijah wanted it to be seen to be of God. He poured on the water publicly, so that all might know that the fire must be a mighty act from Heaven. Elijah was working to a principle—a principle which so often governs the Lord's dealings with His servants. There are times when He seems to be the One to pour on the water, and we wonder why. The answer is that He wishes it to be manifest that the work is all of Himself. Probably that is why He let Elijah stand alone. "I, even I only, am left", he complained—only to be reassured by the Lord that there were seven thousand others. Elijah might have been tempted to retort that he could only have wished that some of them had come out into the open to stand with him. If there were so many others, he might have asked, why was he forced to stand alone? Well, it just had to be so, and in the end it brought more glory to the Lord that way. The work must be brought to such very small dimensions that, when the fire comes, it may be *seen* to be wholly of God.

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

Yes, that was the idea: something not only of God but *all* of God. How often we are tempted to do the opposite of what Elijah did—to put in some human effort and mix it with what God is doing; to try, as it were, to help God. Not seldom does disaster come to God's work because men try to make it easier for Him. Elijah did the opposite. He deliberately made it harder for the Lord. And he did so with the assured faith that it would result

in something mightily effective, because it was all of God.

Elijah's flame burnt on. The juniper tree experience did not quench it. The anointing of Elisha did not finish it. It burnt on till the mightiest experience of resurrection came—the catching up to glory. Rapture will be the final experience of the man of faith who keeps burning on as a very flame of the Lord.

H. F.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Notes of messages given at a Workers' Conference in Hong Kong in 1956.

INTRODUCTION

EVERYONE who desires to serve the Lord should pay attention to two fundamental matters—Life and Truth. Our experience goes to prove that the impact of our ministry is a matter of Life, and its accuracy a matter of Truth.

If you lack living experience, your work will lack impact. If your service is to be effective, you must know what Life is; and you must be able to communicate Life. Whether it be platform ministry, or just a conversation engaged in when visiting someone, it should be in life and should make an impact. I recall a simple story about Moody. At the close of one of his evangelistic meetings he was impelled to speak this word to 'someone who had come forward to see him: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." That may sound just like a doctrinal statement to you, but coming from Moody it was no mere doctrine. He had experienced the truth in his personal life, and he had experienced it in his evangelistic work. Spoken by him, the statement carried weight. And he followed it up by the question: "Have you peace?" The man said he had, whereupon Moody repeated the statement without any comment: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The man went off, but the Holy Spirit kept pressing the word home to his heart, and through it he came to the Lord. The following evening he sought Moody out and told how he had tried to deceive him the previous night, but now he had truly found peace. That is a little illustration, but it contains a great principle, i.e., that when we utter anything in our work for the Lord, our utterance should carry weight. And where does the weight come from? It comes from living experience.

A person may preach on the subject of "Christ, Our Life." From beginning to end of his discourse he may reiterate the fact that Christ is our life;

and yet the whole discourse will be mere doctrine if he lacks the experience of Christ as his life, or if his experience of Christ as his life is superficial. Such a person may be able to preach the doctrine, but his preaching will carry no conviction. To make an impact in preaching it is not eloquence that is needed, nor the ability to impart knowledge; what is needed is experience. I have met brothers whose utterance is heavy and halting, yet what they utter gets right home to the heart. How does that come about? They themselves are in the good of what they utter. I have also met brothers who have remarkable eloquence and whose every sentence is intelligible as well as fluent, and people seem to be moved; but after a while all that remains is the impression of an essay or an oration; there is no substance to it. What is the explanation? Lack of Life.

Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters, you need to see clearly that the impact of your ministry will be determined by your life. It will correspond to the measure of your spiritual experience. This principle is inescapable. No matter how active you may be, your activity will be effective only to the extent of your personal experience, not beyond. For instance, if you yourself have not had an experience of consecration, you will never be able to lead another into that experience. You will not be able to do any spiritual work that exceeds the stage of your spiritual life. Whatever point you may have reached in your own development, up to that point will your ministry reach, but no further. Even if you should excel Paul in the loftiness of your preaching, you will not measure up to Paul in the loftiness of your ministry; it will just be the measure of your own life. Do not imagine, dear brothers and sisters, that ministry is just ability to preach. Ministry is a matter of Life.

But while the reality of our work is determined by Life, it is Truth that determines its accuracy

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

and its safeness. Some people have a living experience, but they lack knowledge of the Truth; consequently they get into difficulties when it comes to service. As soon as they set to work, if they do not go to one extreme, they go to the other. They have something real to minister, but because they are not clear in regard to the Truth, their leadership is unreliable. Let me illustrate. I have heard the doctrine preached that a person can be justified without being born again. Doctrinally this is inaccurate. The Word of God shows us that justification and the new birth are two aspects of the one thing. As soon as a person is justified he is born again; conversely, if he has experienced the new birth he has certainly been justified. Yet there are very earnest people who declare that even though you have been justified and are saved, you have not necessarily been born again. The result of such preaching is that many saved people come into great distress and ask God to grant them an experience of the new birth. Though such doctrine is wrong, the experience of those who expound it may be right. I know such a person, and he has a real measure of power, for he himself has a real experience of the new birth.

To take another instance, 23 years ago (i.e. in 1933), I made a special point of going to hear a certain famous evangelist. He was a powerful preacher and was greatly used of God in the salvation of souls. On the particular evening when I attended one of his meetings I saw a number of people come to repentance. But what do you think he preached? He spoke from Mark v on the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years, and with that as his subject he preached a sermon of which this is the gist:—Mr. So-and-So has come to town to lead revival meetings, and you have all turned out to hear. Mr. So-and-So proclaims the power of the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse the heart, and you all sing—"The precious blood of Jesus cleanses my heart, cleanses my heart, cleanses my heart." But before long Mr. So-and-So departs, and you gradually grow cold again, and within a couple of months those hearts that were cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus have become defiled again. There has been an issue of blood! Six months or so pass, and along comes another preacher. He leads another series of revival meetings; and soon you are all singing again—"The precious blood of Jesus cleanses my heart, cleanses my heart, cleanses my heart." Then you are all cleansed again. But this other preacher departs and you grow cold once more. Again there is an issue of blood!

All this was graphically illustrated on the black-

board; and when an appeal was based on the message, many went forward confessing that it had depicted their actual state, and they sought afresh the cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus. While I sat there listening, I sighed as I said to myself: What sort of a doctrine is this? The doctrine was wide of the mark, yet despite weakness of doctrine, the preaching carried weight.

There are many evangelists whose preaching makes an impact, but because it is not fully in line with the Truth, those who are saved through their labours often do not progress spiritually; therefore in our ministry we must see to it that Life and Truth go hand in hand. The Life must be expressed by the Truth; and the Truth must be the vehicle by which the Life is conveyed to others. You may possess the real thing yourself; but it is a matter of consequence that what is within your heart be expressed in an accurate presentation of the Truth. If your ministry is to be of value to God and to man it is essential that you have both living experience and scriptural knowledge.

We hope that in the days to come many of you will be able to bear responsibility in the Church and that you will be workers who will count for the Lord; so we urge you to press on in the way of Life and Truth. Do not emphasize Life to the exclusion of Truth, nor Truth to the exclusion of Life. Keep the emphasis on Life *and* Truth. Remember the importance of both. Whatever responsibility you may have to face—whether in the preaching of the Word, or in any of the multitudinous matters that arise in connection with the Church or the Work—see to it that you bring the weight of living experience to bear upon everything; and see to it also that your experience rests on the Truth. You must take pains to study the Word of God, not just reading it at random according to your fancy; and you must spend some time reading books and periodicals of spiritual value. We greatly desire that the Lord will raise up from among you a company who will have a solid basis of spiritual experience and of spiritual knowledge. Only thus will the Church be truly established under your care, and only thus will the Work entrusted to you be really reliable.

I have spent some time before the Lord seriously considering what matters we should take up in these morning gatherings, and I believe He would have us spend the time exclusively looking into the question of spiritual experience. We cannot expect to exhaust the subject, for our own experience is limited; but I hope, by the Lord's grace, that through these talks many of you will enter into a deeper experience of spiritual things; also I trust

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

they will be clearly illumined by the Truth, so that all your spiritual experiences will be accompanied by spiritual understanding. The statements made in all our talks will be based on the Scriptures, but I shall not give the references. I believe many of you know the Bible well enough to find the passages for yourselves. It will be splendid exercise for you and will help you to a more thorough knowledge of the Word.

I. THE NEW BIRTH

We shall begin our studies with the experience of the new birth, for this is the first spiritual experience. Only those who are born again can work for God. And in our work of bringing others to Him, this also is our starting-point.

I have already referred to the doctrine that a person can be justified without being born again, and I pointed out that this is erroneous teaching. But now I am going to consider that erroneous teaching.

After the close of the last world-war a company of us, fellow-workers who had been unable to meet for several years, found ourselves together again in Shanghai. We compared our experiences during the interval, and of course we talked about the state of the various churches. As our work had taken us from place to place, many of the workers were known to us all, so we kept asking: "How is brother So-and-So getting on? And how is such-and-such a sister faring? The answers led to a question asked, half seriously, half in fun: "Don't you think it's possible for a person to be saved without being born again?" We had met brothers and sisters regarding whose salvation it was impossible to raise a question, and yet we would shake our heads and ask: "Have their spirits really been quickened into life?" They believed that the Lord Jesus is the Word made Flesh; they believed that He died for their sins, and they believed assuredly that God had forgiven them, for they had the joy of sins forgiven. You could not shake their assurance of salvation; and yet if you lived with them for a time, you would not be able to touch their spirits, and you would find that their judgments and their outlook were the same as those of the unsaved. It was our consideration of such a state that caused us to ask one another jocularly: "Are such people really born again?"

Now then let us ask: What really takes place at new birth? Or shall we ask: Have you been born again? You say, Yes! Then, how do you know you are born again? Oh! brothers and sisters, the new birth is no mean matter; it is a

mighty thing. It is not only a question of the quickening into life of your spirit, it is the incoming of God. If you have not been born again, then God is still external to you. He is above you and around you, but not within you. When you are born again, God Himself comes into your life. At new birth the Divine life enters into human life. Oh! you need to see this experience in its true dimensions. It is a stupendous thing.

New birth is the incoming of the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit who comes to dwell in us when we are born again is none other than God Himself. New birth is the incoming of Life; and since God is Life, what actually happens when we are born again is not merely that God bestows on us a thing called "life", but that He Himself becomes our life. And the new birth is the incoming of Christ to make His abode in man.

Do you see then what a vast thing the new birth is? It has brought God Himself into your spirit; it has brought the Holy Spirit into your spirit; it has brought the Life of God into your spirit; it has brought Christ into your spirit. And because of this incoming, your spirit has been quickened into life. The state of your spirit after new birth is totally different from the state of your spirit before new birth. Formerly God was not there; the Spirit of God was not there; the Life of God was not there; Christ was not there. Not only so, but your spirit was a dead spirit, a spirit that had lost its capacity to function. But this mighty incoming has brought a new content into your life, by which your spirit has been renewed and your function Godward recovered.

And now for a little practice along the line of what we have just learned! How would you determine whether or not a person is born again? In all our contacts with others we must seek to be spiritually helpful, but the help we offer will vary with the spiritual state of the different individuals. And how are you going to discover their state? How are you going to tell whether or not a person is born again? Be on the alert lest you be deceived by his doctrinal knowledge. It may surpass that of many a theologian and yet be no indication of the new birth. Remember that if anyone is born again, the spirit of that one has been quickened into life and that one now possesses the very nature of God, for God Himself has come to dwell in his spirit. When you meet a person you must learn to sense whether his spirit is alive or dead, and whether or not he is indwelt by God.

I often feel rather dubious about the conclusions reached by church leaders after their examination of candidates for baptism. I have

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

heard them catechize people after this fashion: -

- “Can you tell us who created all things?”
 “God.”
 “Do you know who the Lord Jesus is?”
 “He is God.”
 “Do you know what work the Lord Jesus accomplished?”
 “The Lord Jesus died on the Cross to save sinners.”
 “Then you are a sinner?”
 “Yes.”
 “What happened to the Lord Jesus after He died?”
 “He rose again.”
 “And where did He go after His resurrection?”
 “He went to Heaven.”
 “Do you believe He is coming again?”
 “Yes.”
 “How do you know you are saved?”
 “I know from John iii. 16.”
 “How do you know from John iii. 16?”
 “John iii. 16 says that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish; I believe, therefore I shall not perish.”

Then follows a time of prayer, and the candidate prays a nice little prayer. But I have a query about that candidate's salvation. This type of examination is a doctrinal one and does not reveal whether the candidate has been saved or not.

In the Spring of 1948 we had an evangelistic campaign in Fuchow and several hundred people were saved. A baptismal service was arranged shortly after and the brethren pressed me to give them some direction in the matter of examining candidates for baptism. Reluctant though I was, I yielded. The first candidate was a woman. As soon as she sat down I asked: “Do you find this world an attractive place?” The responsible brethren stared in amazement at the question. The woman's tears started to flow as she answered: “Formerly I thought the world a most attractive place, but I no longer do.” “Why not?” I asked. “Because the Lord now lives in my heart, and if I love the world even a little bit, I feel so miserable.” Immediately I asked: “Do you want to be baptized?” “I truly do,” she said. “But do you know the meaning of baptism?” I enquired. “Yes,” she answered. “It means my separation from the world.” Therewith I entered an “O.K.” in the register. As soon as the sister had left, the responsible brethren said they felt that was rather a risky way of doing things. “Was that candidate clear as to who the Lord Jesus was? Did she know that God was the Creator of all?”

Presently a second person appeared, and I straightway asked: “Do you like to sin?” “Yes.” “Then do you continue to sin?” “No.” “But how is it that you like to sin and yet don't go on sinning?” “I feel wretched if I do.” “When did you begin to feel like that?” “From the day I first prayed to the Lord Jesus.” I was about to enter my “O.K.” when the leaders quickly interposed: “Do you know who Jesus Christ is?” “He's the Son of God.” “Do you know what work He accomplished?” “He died on the Cross for my sins.” “Are you saved?” “I'm certainly saved.” “How do you know?” “I used to love sin, but I can no longer continue in sin.” By this time the leaders also approved.

I have used these illustrations to show that if a person is born again his spirit is alive and is impressionable; it functions Godward and has fellowship with God, because God's own nature is within it. If you want to discover whether or not an individual is born again, you must reach beyond his intellect to his inner being. Your words must touch his spirit and you must get him to utter something that will reveal the condition of his spirit. But if you are going to reach the spirit of others, and discover their spiritual state, you yourself will need to be a spiritual person.

One day I went with a brother to see a certain individual. After the interview we had the following conversation:—“What do you think of the person we have just seen?” “He's certainly a saved man.” “How do you know?” “How could anyone be so clear on the Truth if he had never met God?” The trouble was, this brother himself confused spirituality with knowledge of spiritual things. He himself seldom gave God an opportunity to touch his spirit; and because he lived largely in the realm of doctrine, when he came to deal with enquirers he based his conclusions on their doctrinal knowledge rather than on their spiritual state. Do take note of this, that the sphere in which you live your daily life will affect your judgments regarding others. If your life is habitually lived in the realm of doctrine, then you will stress doctrine in your contact with others. If your normal life is in the Spirit, your touch with others will be spiritual.

(At this point someone was called out from the audience to act as enquirer, while another was called upon to catechize him.)

Here is an enquirer! Now you must discover whether or not he is born again. Talk quite naturally to him and try to draw out his spirit. It is extremely difficult to discover the real state of some people, because the spirit is so encased in the

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

soul. They have imbibed all the usual religious conceptions, and you are apt to think their experience is spiritual when they talk about the Lord being with them, or about the comfort they derive from spiritual things. Actually their experience may be wholly in the realm of the soul.

—It is rather a difficult case we have here. Tackle him on the subject of sin and see if his conscience has ever met the light of God. See if his conscience is functioning. When we meet a person who is just naturally religious we find his conscience is not sensitive. He will tell you he cannot live without the support of religion, but when he tells you he has no consciousness of sin, you can be clear that he has never met God.—

Brothers and sisters, there are many points to be taken into consideration in seeking to help others; but the supreme thing for us to note is, that if we are to be good servants of the Lord, our daily walk must be in continual dependence upon the Spirit. The Truth is the track along which our lives must advance, and from which we must never deviate; but the Spirit is the Source of our life, so we must learn to live our lives in the Spirit. If in matters big and little we habitually walk in dependence upon Him, our spirits will become strong and sensitive, and no matter what class of people we meet, we shall get spiritual registrations regarding their condition.

In seeking to help others, your approach must on no account be only a doctrinal one. If you find that a person is not born again, then you must seek to help him on the basis of experience. You may, with the utmost simplicity, present a word of Scripture such as I John v. 12, and then ask him: "Have *you* the Son of God?" then you can come in with a little doctrine. Thereafter you can help him to pray to the Lord, either by praying with him on the spot, or by indicating the way of prayer. You may suggest that he go home, shut his door, kneel down, and opening his being to the Lord Jesus make contact with Him through prayer. I have had very satisfactory results in cases where the individuals have gone home and prayed alone to the Lord and the Lord has met them.

In the Spring of 1939 a certain judge was spending part time in the law-court and part time teaching Chinese in a secondary school. I was invited to preach the Gospel in that school once daily for 3 or 4 consecutive days. Though this teacher was an utter heathen, some of the Christian students were on friendly terms with him, and they persuaded him to attend the meetings. On the second or third evening, at the conclusion of the message, we invited all to remain behind who so desired,

and this teacher was among them. An opportunity was given to ask questions, and he asked: "Would you tell me if God is male or female." I answered simply: "Among men there are male and female, but with God there is neither male nor female." One of the brothers in the local company, who was also one of his students, took note of him, and a day or so later sought to bring him to the Lord. The teacher asked: "How do you go about it if you want to believe in Jesus?" The brother answered: "Mr. So-and-So, if you want to believe in the Lord Jesus the way is utterly simple. You go home to-night, shut your door, kneel down in the presence of Jesus, (He is omnipresent), utter a few words to Him, and you will be saved." The judge seemed rather doubtful, but the Holy Spirit was at work. That night he thought to himself: "I'll try anyway and see if it works." So he went into his room, closed his door, closed his eyes and prayed: "Jesus, please save me." He told us later that when he opened his eyes he saw no difference; everything was just as it had been before. So he retired to bed. When he got up next morning things seemed still just the same as usual; but after breakfast, as he was making his way to the law-court, he became aware of a deep joy welling up from within; and as he looked around him, heaven and earth seemed to have changed. He walked on air to the law-court, and when he returned home he broke the news to his wife. "Never in all my life did I experience such joy as this morning," he said, "and that joy is still with me. It comes from believing in Jesus." His wife, as raw a heathen as he had been, scoffed at him and said: "Surely you don't mean to tell me that an official in your position would believe in Jesus!" I think it was that same evening he came over to see us and said: "I truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and I'm a totally changed being. My outlook on sin has changed, my outlook on humanity has changed—everything has changed!" On and on he went, telling how different everything was. And he had been a believer for barely one day! We simply listened in silence. We knew this transformation was an inward thing and was the result of the Holy Spirit having made contact with his spirit.

In our touch with people we must seek to get at their actual inward condition, and then bring them to the Lord. We cannot possibly bring about a contact with the Lord; that is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, but we can point the way. It is this pointing the way that is so worth while. Our many words are often an intrusion and only divert them from direct contact with the Holy Spirit. It is here we have an important lesson to learn. When

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

we have located the real inward need of a person, then we should show him the way his need can be met, and let him himself make contact with God. This requires experience, and this also requires the Word of God. You need to apply the particular Scripture called for in the particular case, which means that you need to be thoroughly acquainted with the Scripture. You must have personal experience, and you must have a knowledge of the Truth. And practice is essential.

Scriptures referred to in relation to the New Birth :

God comes to dwell in man ... I John iv. 13.

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in man ... Ezek. xxxvi. 27 (cp. Eph. i. 13; I Cor. vi. 19; John xiv. 16, 17).

Life comes into man ... I John v. 12.

Christ comes into man ... II Cor. xiii. 5.

Man's state before New Birth ... Jer. xvii. 9; Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Eph. ii. 1, iv. 18.

Man's state at New Birth ... John xvi. 8; Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Ps. li. 17; John iii. 14, 15.

Man's state after New Birth ... Rom. vii. 18; Ezek xxxvi. 26; Rom. viii. 10; Col. iii. 4.

W. L.

(To be continued)

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

II. A SPIRITUAL SEED

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed . . . he shall see of the travail of his soul" (Isaiah liii. 10, 11).

"They are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Romans ix. 6-8).

"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians iii. 16).

"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians vi. 16).

FOR our present consideration many other fragments of the same kind could be added, but these are sufficient, surely, to impress us. Of course, they will not impress us in the same way as they did those to whom they were first written. We are not able, without some very real illumination by the Holy Spirit, to recognise and appreciate the tremendous implications, the profound meaning of these statements of Paul. No, we have not yet fathomed all that Paul had come to see of what Christ meant, of what came in with Christ, of what happened when Christ came in, of what turned upon the advent of Christ. May the Spirit

of God register something of those tremendous implications, even now.

It was this revelation which came to Paul, and his apprehension of the significance of Christ, that was the cause of all the trouble. If ever there was a man who got into trouble; around whom trouble circled and seethed, wherever he went—who seemed to **make trouble**, it was this man Paul. But when you ask what the cause of it all is, it is just this with which we are now occupied. It is a matter which in principle will always set up a furor; and as to its significance it comes from the realm of greater intelligence than the human.

Now Paul did, of course, recognise that there was such a thing as a nation of Jews, a Jewish nation. That sounds far too trite and obvious. With a wave of the hand, and mark you, a significant wave of the hand, a kind of objective wave, he said, "Behold Israel after the flesh". Whilst that is something to take account of, it is, nevertheless, objective—"Behold Israel, after the flesh". He recognised that that nation stood in a special relationship to the sovereign ways of God in history. Indeed, he was proud and very glad that he had been born in that nation. He had a deep heart-love for his nation, and he longed, as he said, that they might be saved: "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God is for them, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1). Notice how objective is his attitude; he is not saying: 'that we might be saved'. Note that, because it is a feature of this whole matter.

MARCH—APRIL, 1957.

But, with all, with all his recognition, all his pleasure, and his longing and praying in that direction, he had come to see that they were not by nature "the Israel of God". That is the root of all the trouble. I underline the words *by nature*; they were not by nature *the* Israel of God, which, of course, they claimed to be. It is true that Israel was something, but the *true* Israel, the true Israel to which he referred in that fragment "the Israel of God" or the true "Israel of God"—was not a natural thing at all, and it is not. It is spiritual. It is not a Jewish, historic, earthly thing; it is not Abraham's *natural* generation. This is what Paul is saying, and it is only what his Master, the Lord Jesus, had said. This Israel is Christ's generation; this "seed" is Christ, and those who are Christ's, begotten, born out of His travail. Christ's seed is essentially spiritual. No one was ever born of Him naturally. And yet, through those many centuries, the world has become occupied by His seed, which He is seeing, as of the travail of His soul. This seed is not begotten of Abraham, but begotten of God; it is not descended from Abraham through Jacob, the man with every feature of that which is natural ('supplanter' his name means, that is, 'one who takes hold', whose nature it is to be possessive—a very clear mark of the natural man) not through ambitious, scheming, cunning, clever, opportunist, unscrupulous and self-strong Jacob. This seed does not come through Jacob, but through Israel. What a great deal that means spiritually; that, having encountered God, and being virtually dead, through the grace of God he has survived. He said "I have seen God face to face, and my life is spared"—the most wonderful thing has happened; I have seen God face to face, and my *life* is spared! To come into an encounter with God, as did Jacob, means death: yes, and virtually that is what it was: and typically, Israel must be born, or there is no future—there is no future at all—*Isra-el!* Now this all leads us to the true "seed of Christ", the true "Israel of God".

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM

We begin therefore with the true significance of Abraham. Abraham represents a terminal point in the history of the Old Testament, and then, from him, an unbroken course of national existence proceeded up to Christ. Through Abraham a race was re-born and marked out in special relationship to God's eternal desire. There is much that is technical, interesting and instructive in that study, but we leave it. You know that the first name, designation, of that nation or race, was 'Hebrew' which

means 'that which has come from beyond'; 'the man from over there, beyond the river', meaning, beyond the Euphrates, simply, 'the man from beyond'. The Hebrew race then, is that which has migrated over, come from beyond. Later, they became known as the 'Jews'; that is quite a limited title, and just means the 'descendants of Judah'. In the beginning it just had that limited meaning of 'descendants from Judah', in their country of Judæa, but it became more general. Later still they became known as Israel—the descendants of Jacob *after* his crisis at Peniel.

Knowing all this, Paul nevertheless says that this was not the true Israel. He, like all the others, at one time believed that it was; but he had come to see that it was not the *true* Israel, that the true Israel is *inward*, and not natural or outward. And that opens up a large field of very important consideration, which we will deal with later.

ISRAEL—A GREAT OBJECT LESSON

As the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and later the Temple in the Land, with all its components, was the embodiment of spiritual and heavenly principles and realities; as the priesthood, the sacrifices, the feasts were likewise the embodiment of spiritual realities, and not the realities themselves—so it was with Israel. These are the things which make up the nation, they make up the life of the nation; they *are* Israel. The point is this—it was possible, and is possible, to separate between the things themselves and those spiritual thoughts and principles. So that it is possible to have a Tabernacle, replete with priesthood, sacrifices, and feasts, and yet not have the spiritual reality. It is possible to separate these things, because they are not one. Even God has no place for those symbols when they have lost their spiritual power and meaning. He will vehemently reject the *things*—Ark, Tabernacle, and everything else—without compunction.

Paul carries this right through to Israel. He says: 'Israel after the flesh' is one thing, 'Israel after the Spirit' is *another*; these things can be divided, and God has set aside 'Israel after the flesh'. Put it another way—what God is after, what He is concerned with, what He is going on with, is that which was represented by them, the reality.

The cry of all the prophets is that this divide has taken place. Israel is going on with the Temple, going on with the services, going on with the sacrifices, but it is all hollow. There is a tremendous difference between the seed of Abraham after the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

flesh and the seed of Christ. What is the seed of Christ? It is something essentially, intensely, spiritually *real*! It is not something that bears a name; it is not something which holds certain doctrines and truths—the Law, or what corresponds to that in Christianity: it is not something that performs certain rites, and goes through certain ceremonies: it is not something along that external line at all—be it intellectual, emotional, volitional, or physical—it is something inwardly real. It is “Christ *in* you, the hope of glory” (Col. i. 27). This is what God is after. And if Israel was raised up for a purpose, it was to set forth these realities in a pictorial, symbolic way. God’s object is not a Jewish nation as such, but a heavenly people, constituted on spiritual realities. Israel is for all time a great object lesson which God has set in the midst of the nations to indicate spiritual principles. They will remain that object lesson to the end. God, in preserving, keeping that nation, does so, not because of that nation itself, but to maintain an object lesson in the midst of the nations, especially to Christianity.

UNMISTAKABLE FEATURES

Disciplined
Let us look at Israel after the flesh. There are some features which cannot be mistaken! Many years ago, I knew an outstanding and well-known Christian Jew, who had travelled all over the world. He said to me on one occasion: ‘It does not matter what nation I go into, and how much they have become apparently absorbed in the nation where they are living, I can always tell a Jew; he may have fair hair or dark hair; there may be differences arising from their living in different countries for generations, but there is something that I can always recognise, and I never make a mistake.’ What does God say about that? He says to us, as being of the seed of Christ, that this true Israel should be at least as pronounced in its features, in its distinctiveness, as they are! There should be no mistaking a child of God; everybody should know when they have met a child of God. By means of that, God says to us that this seed, which is the true Israel of God, born of the travail of Christ, is to bear the unmistakable character of Christ. All who meet that seed know they have met, not father Abraham, but another Father—they have met God in Christ.

This is very searching; but it is the true exegesis, the true interpretation of this word—“his seed”, “he shall see his seed”: every one betraying His features, bearing His characteristics, being recognised; not because they bear a name—

whether that be Israel or Christian; not because they observe the law and the customs; not because they hold the oracles and the truths; not because they do or do not certain things—but because they bear the likeness of Him of whom they are born. That is what God says—unmistakable features! “By this shall all men know . . . if ye have love one to another” (John xiii. 35).

THE LAW OF SEPARATION *Separation*

Another thing about ‘Israel after the flesh’, which goes very much along with that, is that law which God laid down for them, so firmly and so severely, and upon the observance or violation of which their very national existence hung—the law of separation. Abraham is in Ur of the Chaldees, in Babylonia, with all the Baalite worship, the two thousand deities, on the other side, over there. God calls him ‘Abraham the Hebrew’; he has come across, passed over, come out, been severed from his country, and then brought into another land which God is going to purge of every other seed. That is His intention, to purge that land of every other seed, and to populate it and fill it only with this seed; and then to lay down, in the strictest possible way, the law forbidding intermarriage with any other people or nation on pain of unqualified rejection. There were, of course, deep reasons for that. There was the spiritual reason of ‘other gods’, and the opening of the door to that other spiritual realm. That is what is meant by ‘iniquity’ in the Old Testament, what the prophets spoke of as ‘fornication’—the marring of “the virgin daughter of Zion”. But here it is: no intermarriage whereby there will be loss of distinctiveness of life and character. It is the severest law of God. Because of the violation of that law God had all His long-drawn-out controversy with Israel through the prophets, and, at last, sent the nation where they chose to be—into another land—and let them feel something of what that means. The bringing back of that remnant is so full of significance, when you recognise that it is reconstitution on this very principle.

Now God has written this large—and “the things that were written aforetime were written for our learning”. He is saying by Israel: On the positive and on the negative side My seed is different; My seed is distinct; My seed must have no intermarriage; it must not lose its distinctiveness; it must be a separate thing. The seed of Christ is like that—spiritually separate. It seems that right from the beginning, in the case of Adam and Eve, and from then onward, the one determined inten-

MARCH—APRIL, 1957.

tion of Satan has been to destroy that distinctiveness of what is of God. All Israel's history is just that; and he did not stay there, he pressed it through to the very case of Jesus Himself. That is the focal point of the temptations of Jesus, in some way to insinuate something that would destroy His separateness from everything that was not of God. Satan's efforts to destroy distinctiveness, so successful in the case of Israel, so unsuccessful when concentrated upon Jesus Himself, have been continued throughout the history of the Church. God's spiritual law is written so deeply here for us. This seed is something not of the flesh, not of this world; something different, something quite other; a Divine seed that does not belong here, has not originated here, has not its roots here. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is . . . for ye died" (Col. iii. 1, 3). Now Paul saw quite well that Israel after the flesh had become something very other than that, very mixed up and compromised here in this world.

strengthened by opposition and antagonism and persecution—what a lesson!

DISCRIMINATION AS TO FOOD *Discrimination*

Then there is this whole question of food—a very acute question with Israel after the flesh. The Law required them to be very particular, very careful, very discriminating—but all that is written only as an object lesson. It says something of which the children of God, the true Israel of God, must take note. Have we a spiritual faculty which corresponds to their natural one in selectiveness of food? *Discerning*—this is exactly what John was talking about in his letter, when he said: "The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you" (I John ii. 27)—'you know . . . you know . . . '—this is a spiritual instinct or faculty of knowing what is of Christ and what is not of Christ. How important it is to keep the seed pure through spiritual discernment!

ISRAEL'S GOVERNING HOPE *Extraneous*

There is one further undying feature with 'Israel after the flesh'. It has persisted all down the ages, and is as strong to-day as ever it was—their hope! Why is it that those who are able still go to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem? These people are characterized by this deep-set, deep-rooted hope! Hope! Something; sometime; someone; one day—they live for that; it is that which has carried them through, supported them, sustained them, kept them—their hope! If ever that should fade in Israel, they will disintegrate indeed, and they will fall a prey to their enemies. It is this that holds together, and this that gives the power to stand up and go on. With us, it is a spiritual thing; something that is part of our birth. The true spiritual seed of Christ is dominated, mastered, by what the Apostle calls, "the blessed hope", "the day of the Lord", "the promise of his coming"—a master-hope. Is it not true to spiritual experience, that when we are really born again, a sense of prospect, of a future, is born in our hearts, and it remains a strong thing throughout. This is not something taken on as teaching, not even the teaching of the 'Second Coming', the coming again of the Lord, but there is something beyond the teaching, the Spirit Himself has given birth to a hope within us; we are living for a Day, and that Day is our strength; it holds us on our way. How true that is, and how rich it is in the suffering people of God in all times, and in our own.

Cohesiveness THE COHESION OF ISRAEL

Another thing about Israel which is quite apparent even now, and has been all the way through history, is their cohesion. There is no doubt about it. If you deal with these people, you meet 'clannishness' (if you like to call it that), something very loyal to itself—*very* loyal to itself. They are a people bound together in blood and in consciousness and in jealousy, about whom there is a unity, a cohesion and an integration which is unique. Though scattered over the earth, and seemingly broken up, they are one people. What a lesson! What an object lesson!

Turning to the New Testament we find that this seed, having one origin, one source, one life-principle, is one. That is the meaning of John xvii, is it not? The secret of oneness, of unity, is not in doctrine, in practice, in tradition or in names—God only knows how true that is! It is something deeper than that—it is in *birth*, and what that means, inheritance in the blood. How pathetically tragic that there is not this jealousy, this loyalty, among those who claim to be of this seed! What a break-down! We ought to be very jealous for every child of God; we ought to be loyal to one another, because we are of the same family. There ought to be something here that is stronger than all the outside forces. That has proved true in 'Israel after the flesh', for the most violent action of outside forces has only brought out their inward cohesion. Their unity is manifested and even

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE TURNING POINT OF THE
DISPENSATIONS

In the light of what we have been saying hitherto, I want to turn you to the Gospel by John, and in particular to the third chapter.

In spite of many years of familiarity with and much reading of that chapter, I feel there is still much in it that I have not yet grasped. All that we have said, and more; all that is indicated and signified in the whole of the Old Testament and of the New Testament is implicit in this third chapter of John's Gospel. It is a chapter upon the meaning of which two mighty dispensations turn. The tremendous change which has been indicated, which Paul came to see by revelation—this tremendous change from 'Israel after the flesh' to 'Israel after the Spirit'—centres in that chapter.

This Gospel by John has been more of a bone of contention, controversy and conflict, than any of the other Gospels. The popular trend amongst Bible 'scholars' now is to rank Mark's Gospel first and highest. Mark is the key to everything; Mark is the sum of everything; they are making a tremendous amount of Mark! We are not saying they are wrong. After all, there is not much difficulty about Mark is there? Matthew and Luke—well, they do not present much trouble, they provoke very little dispute or conflict—but John! Some of them have written him off altogether, ruled him right out, they will not have him. Is that not significant? When you are dealing with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew and Luke, you are dealing mainly with the historic Jesus, the earthly Christ, what they call the Jesus of history. When you come to John's Gospel, you come into the absolutely spiritual realm—it is the heavenly Christ that is here—not born of Adam or Abraham, but—from eternity. Look at the word 'heavenly' on his lips in this Gospel. Everything here is in the spiritual realm. John, as you know, calls all the miracles 'signs'—things that have another meaning, that signify something else, and we cannot see the other, the something else, unless God opens our eyes; it is spiritual and is set in the spiritual realm. That is what Satan hates, that is the cause of all the trouble. Men who only operate in the realm of human intellect and reason, even in their approach to the Scriptures, cannot come into this realm at all without a sense of uneasiness, for it exposes unspirituality. When we come into the realm of the spiritual seed—or to put that another way—when we come into the realm where God is after, not an earthly, a traditional, an historical, but a spiritual people, we

come into the realm of the intensest conflict and controversy. Notice how this very Gospel proceeds in an atmosphere of antagonism—it is like that. There comes a time when, because of that, Jesus has to withdraw with His disciples in order to have them alone, to prepare them for a day that is coming. This controversy, this conflict, is constantly surrounding them.

THE SECURING OF "TRUE ISRAEL"—
THE REALM OF INTENSEST CONFLICT

Now that is very significant in the larger application. The securing of a spiritual, a heavenly, a Divine seed, in Satan's domain, is fraught with the bitterest conflict, an opposition, the intensity of which can only be explained on this ground. The more the children of God are found going on with Christ in a spiritual way towards God's full end, the more diverse and inexplicable conflict will they meet, and that from every realm. It just happens! If we really get off the traditional, historical basis of life, even in Christianity, on to those higher levels of what is spiritual or what is of Christ, essentially and utterly of Christ, we shall come into the realm of the bitterest conflict.

That is why this all leads back to the matter of travail which was before us in the previous chapter. We find in the New Testament that the travail was not all over when the child was born. It was not all over typically and symbolically when Israel was secured out of Egypt—it went on. When Moses came back and met Hobab, his father-in-law, it says they greeted one another, and asked of one another's health, and that "Moses told his father in law all that the Lord had done . . . for Israel's sake, all the travail . . . by the way" (Ex. xviii. 8). After Egypt! So the birth is not the end. Paul says: "I am again in travail until Christ be [fully] formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). The Church was born out of the travail of Christ, but what a travail she has been in again and again, and will be to the end. It all comes back there—the securing and perfecting of this spiritual seed is fraught with conflict. Whether we see the implications of what is signified by that statement or not, we need to think about it—it will explain a great deal. There is the difference of two worlds between spiritual Christianity and traditional Christianity, just as much as there is between 'Israel after the flesh' and 'Israel after the Spirit'—a tremendous difference. It is going to be seen eventually that the obtaining of the perfected seed of Christ was a very, very costly thing.

May the Lord just write something of this on

MARCH—APRIL, 1957

our hearts, and show us very, very clearly what it is He is really after, that His heart is set upon a people for Himself—a people according to Christ, a heavenly people, a spiritual people, whose life is not comprised of outward things at all, but whose life is the corporate expression of God's

Son; those who bear His unmistakable features.

Oh that it might be possible for people to say: There is no mistaking that one—no mistaking what he is, what she is—he is a 'Jew', she is a 'Jew', in the spiritual Israel—he, she, is a member of Christ!

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

NO PAIN—NO GLORY

MR. Johnson's friend was a keen collector of moths and butterflies, and from time to time asked him to obtain a new specimen to add to his collection. There was one special butterfly which his friend wanted to possess, so he asked Mr. Johnson to do his best to catch one and send it to him.

Every now and again Mr. Johnson saw one of these rare butterflies, but he was never able to catch it. The nearest he ever got was when he tried to capture one which had just been laying her eggs. He missed the butterfly, but he saw where the eggs had been laid, and watched most carefully in the hope that they would hatch out safely.

One day, when he came to look, he found that his hopes had come true, for some of the eggs had hatched out, not into butterflies—for these are not born direct from the eggs—but into larvæ, or what we more often call caterpillars. You can imagine with what care Mr. Johnson took one of these caterpillars to tend and feed it, and how pleased he was to see it growing and fattening as it crawled around on the leaves which he had provided as food.

Then came the day for the great change. The time had come for the larva to turn into a pupa or chrysalis, which is the first stage in the marvellous change from the crawling caterpillar to a lovely butterfly with wings. The caterpillar set to work to spin its cocoon, drawing out from its own body the thin silken thread which it wound round and round itself, till it was like a mummy in an Egyptian tomb. Indeed the cocoon seemed so like a tomb that Mr. Johnson's daughter felt sure that it was really dead, but her father told her not to worry for it was still alive. The little creature almost died, and of course ceased to be a crawling caterpillar for ever. Out of its shrunken body, though, there was to emerge a being which looked new and altogether different, even though as a matter of fact it would come from the same pupa which had shut itself up in its tomb-like cocoon.

They could not hurry the process, but had to

wait with patience for the time when the chrysalis would open and the butterfly come out. The days passed all too slowly. At last, however, the great day came, the day when the tip of the cocoon was slit open by special teeth given to the butterfly for this purpose. The tiny slit showed that the butterfly was not only alive but fully formed, and ready to come out of its grave to show its beauty to the world. Mr. Johnson began to picture the joy of his friend when the rare specimen should reach him.

But it was a most painful effort, this struggle to get out into the light. Mr. Johnson, who had once tried to get through a hedge by means of a hole which was too small for him, guessed how hard it must be for the poor butterfly which was trying its best to crawl through the narrow gap. It pushed and twisted; it wriggled and fought; it came out a little and drew back; it then moved forward again; but no, the crack seemed too small. It was a prisoner.

It was then that Mr. Johnson made his great mistake. He was really quite a patient man, but on this occasion he just could not wait any longer. Besides, he was sorry for the poor suffering insect, which was passing through such pain in its efforts to get free. So he took a small pair of scissors, and with great care he made a tiny snip in the cocoon, so making the hole larger. It was now easy for the butterfly to wriggle out and be free, so out it came, relieved not to have to squeeze any more.

The butterfly was all damp and floppy; it could neither walk nor fly. Mr. Johnson and his daughter waited for the veins to fill up and the wings to extend, but they waited to no purpose. It was clear that there was something wrong. Something very wrong! It flopped around, trying to stretch its wings, but it was all in vain; they would not stretch, and it would never fly. Mr. Johnson's daughter said that it looked like a wet umbrella with several broken ribs.

What a disappointment! Mr. Johnson wrote to his friend to explain what had happened, and to

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

ask why the butterfly had turned out to be so crippled and ugly. Was it because it had been bred in captivity? Was it because the caterpillar had not been given the right leaves for its food? What had gone wrong? The friend wrote back very kindly to tell Mr. Johnson that it was all his fault. No doubt he meant well when he made it easy for the butterfly to come out, but really he had been guilty of thinking that he knew better than God. For in His wonderful wisdom, God has made this violent effort and squeezing to be a part of the process by which the creature is made ready for flight. The tiny hole and the long struggle to get

through were all necessary preparation for its beautiful future. By making things easy for it, Mr. Johnson had robbed it of any chance of life and glory.

No pain—no glory! How often do we ask God to make things easier for us, to spare us trouble or to take away our pain! He sometimes does not answer these prayers, for if He did He would be making the same mistake which Mr. Johnson made. We might have an easier time, but we should miss the chance of growing like the Saviour and showing forth His glory to others.

H. F.

‘Let us see that we are not seeking to partake of the **life without going down** into His death. May not our mistakes in the past, and our lack of spiritual vigour, have arisen from failing to see the power of the Cross in the matter of sanctification? Perhaps we have been tempted to think that the death effected our justification only, and that our sanctification was **entirely in His life**. And this may have led to the idea, more or less prevalent in the minds of many, that having come to the crucified Christ, having seen the Cross in its atoning and justifying aspect, we have now passed beyond it, and have left it behind, because we have entered into living union with the risen Christ’ . . .

‘The Cross of Christ is therefore not only the place where we find the new life, but also the place where we lose our old life. “The putting to death of the Lord Jesus” was the termination of that life which is “after the flesh”, because “our old man”—that is our old unconverted self—“was crucified with Him”. To be brought into oneness with that death, to be so identified with it that we, so to speak, always carry it about, is to be walking in a condition of continual deliverance from the self-life, and to find that the life of Jesus is being manifested in our daily walk.

All spiritual privileges are conditional. The condition of the “life abundant” lies in becoming a partaker of the mind of Him who died unto sin, to be armed with that mind. This is not an isolated experience, a single act, it is a *mind*—that is, a spiritual condition to be ever maintained, and becoming more and more deepened.’

SELECTED

NEW BOOKLET

A God Who Hides Himself

By W. Lee

Price: 2d. each (In U.S.A. \$0.04)

The booklet “Union with Christ in Consecration” is now available in Spanish.

THE NEXT

SPECIAL GATHERINGS

at Honor Oak

will be held, the Lord willing, on

GOOD FRIDAY, April 19, at 11 a.m., 3. 30
& 6. 30 p.m.

SATURDAY, April 20, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, April 21, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MONDAY, April 22, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MARCH — APRIL, 1957.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during December 1956 and January 1957.

Abergavenny 10s., £3; Ahmednagar, India £1; Airdrie £2; Amstelveen, Holland £1; Anon £1; Apeldoorn, Holland £1; Ardingly 7s.; Arogyavaram, India 7s.; Barnston 10s.; Bath 10s.; Bearsden 10s., £2; Bembridge 10s.; Bergen, Norway £1 12s.; Berlin, Germany 16s. 8d.; Berwyn, Pa. 14s. 1; Birmingham 16s., 6s., 7s. 6d.; Bishop Auckland 7s. 6d.; Bognor Regis 5s.; Bourne-mouth £1; Bradford 3s., 10s.; Brighton 5s., 10s., 10s., 5s., £1; Brightons 7s. 6d.; Bristol 10s., £1; Bromley £1; Burnley 2s. 6d.; Calgary, Canada £3 10s.; Canterbury 10s., 14s. 3d.; Chelwood Gate £1; Chislehurst 5s.; Chorley Wood £1; Claremont, Australia 10s.; Clevedon £1; Coonoor, India £1, £2; Copenhagen, Denmark 12s.; Corfe Mullen 5s., £1; Crawley 5s.; Cwmamen 7s. 6d.; Dawlish £1; Deal £1; Dublin 10s., 5s., 2s. 6d.; Dunbar 10s.; Falmouth 6s. 8d.; Frinton-on-Sea 2s. 6d.; Fulstow 8s.; Glasgow 2s. 6d., 8s. 3d., £1, £1, £1; Gravesend £1; Guildford £1; Hassocks £1 2s. 2d.; Hatch End £1; Heliopolis, Egypt £2; Hemyock 5s. 6d.; Hexham-on-Tyne 7s. 6d.; Hindley Green 10s.; Hong Kong 6s. 3d.; Hounslow £1; Hove 4s. 6d.; Ilkley 18s. 10d.; Indianapolis, Ind. £1 8s. 2d.; Inverness £2; Ipswich 10s.; Keith 17s. 4d.; Kingston Hill £1; Kirkcudbright £1; Küsnacht, Switzerland £2 8s. 7d.; Lancing 5s.; Leicester 10s.; Leigh-on-Sea £1; Letchworth 11s.; Leysin, Switzerland 10s.; Lincoln 7s. 6d.; Lisburn £3 17s.; London E.11—£2; N.14—14s.; N.W.4—5s.; S.E.1—4s., £1; S.E.3—10s.; S.E.4—10s. 6d.; S.E.6—10s., 5s.; S.E.13—£5; S.E.14—5s.; S.E.15—6s., 5s., 10s.; S.E.23—10s., £4, £1, 10s., £1 1s., 10s.; S.W.4—10s.; S.W.11—10s.; W.5—7s.6d., £2 2s.; Mablethorpe 5s. 6d.; Manchester 5s.; Manhattan Beach, Calif. 15s. 6d.; Marshboro £1; Melbourne, Australia £1, £4; Midland Park, N.J. £1 15s. 3d.; Musselburgh £1 10s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne 5s., £1, £2; New Mills £1; Newport, I. of W. £1; New York £1 15s. 3d.; Niagara Falls, Canada £3 13s. 10d.; Oldham £2 5s. 6d.; Old Hill £1; Orillia, Canada 14s. 9d.; Oxted £1; Pasadena, California £6 17s. 6d.; Penketh 5s.; Pickens, S.C. 10s.;

Plymouth 10s.; Pretoria, S. Africa 9s. 2d., £1; Richmond 10s., £1; Rochester £1; Ruabon 7s. 6d.; Rufforth £3; Rutherglen 10s., 3s.; St. Gallen, Switzerland 10s.; St. Leonards-on-Sea £2; St. Ursanne, Switzerland £1 10s.; Sandown 6s.; Saskatoon, Canada £3 2s. 10d.; Schlieren, Switzerland £2 1s. 8d., £1; Sedburgh £2; Slough 15s.; Somerset, Tasmania £1 10s.; Southampton 5s. 10d., £1, £1; South Shields 2s. 6d., 10s.; Southwick 10s.; Spennymoor £1; Stornoway £2; Suez, Egypt 10s.; Summer Hill, Australia £2 4s. 2d.; Sunbury-on-Thames 10s., 10s.; Sunderland 4s. 10d.; Taunton £1 1s.; Theydon Bois 2s. 6d.; Thornton Heath £1; Toronto, Canada £1; Tre-lewis £5; Tunbridge Wells 8s. 6d., 13s. 9d., 10s.; Visakhapatnam, India 10s.; Wainwright, Canada 14s. 9d.; Waterhead 6s.; Waterloo, Canada £1; Welling 10s.; Wendover 17s. 3d.; Whitley Bay 4s.; Wissembourg, France £1; Worthing 10s., 5s.; £5; York 10s., Zürich, Switzerland £1 12s. 4d.

Total £189 17s. 1d.

Arlington, Va. \$6; Asheville, N.C. \$0.50; Banning, Cal. \$10; Barnstead, N.H. \$2; Birmingham, Ala. \$10, \$25; Boulder, Colo. \$1.35; Cambridge, Mass. \$10; Canoga Park, Cal. \$50; Chicago, Ill. \$15, \$5; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$3; Dallas, Texas \$2; Englewood, Colo. \$2; Fairgrove, Mo. \$1; Folly Beach, S.C. \$3; Fremont, Ohio \$10; Jacksonville, Fla. \$5; Los Angeles, Cal. \$10, \$2; Milwaukee, Wis. \$1; Nashville, Tenn. \$1, \$4; Norbeck, S.D. \$10; Orlando, Fla. \$5; Philadelphia, Pa. \$5, \$1, \$1, \$1; Rochester, Minn. \$25; Roseville, Mich. \$5; Springfield, Oregon \$7.38; Tulare, Cal. \$2; Wellesley, Mass. \$10

Total \$251.23

Sarawak, Borneo A£1. 0s. 0d.
Calgary, Alberta C.\$2.25 Kitchener, Ont. C.\$3.00
Total C.\$5.25

Wallisellen, Switzerland Sw.Fr.25, Nice, France Sw.Fr.20

Total Sw.Frs.45.00

Bangalore, India Rs.10/-; Lucknow, India Rs.6/-;
Renigunta, India Rs.10/-

Total Rs.26/-

WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

By T.A-S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS	7/- (\$1.50)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY	5/6 (\$1.18)
WHAT IS MAN?	5/- (\$1.07)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY	4/- (\$0.85)
THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY	
Vol. 1 All Things in Christ	3/6 (\$0.75)
Vol. 2 The Mystery	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL I)	2/6 (\$0.53)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION	2/6 (\$0.53)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE	2/6 (\$0.53)
IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE	2/- (\$0.43)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS	1/- (\$0.21)
GOD HATH SPOKEN	1/- (\$0.21)
IN CHRIST	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION	3d (\$0.05)
VISION AND VOCATION	2d (\$0.04)
SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
UNION WITH CHRIST IN CONSECRATION	2d (\$0.04)
THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXEMPLARY	
CHRISTIAN LIFE	2d (\$0.04)
THE MEASURE OF CHRIST	2d (\$0.04)
THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD	2d (\$0.04)
THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE	
LORD JESUS	2d (\$0.04)
THE SERVICE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
ON KNOWING THE LORD	2d (\$0.04)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN	2d (\$0.04)
ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE	2d (\$0.04)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

(<i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i>)	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF	1d (\$0.02)
WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?	3d (\$0.05)
	2/6 a dozen (\$0.53)

By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
(<i>For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated</i>)	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
(<i>For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated</i>)	5/- (\$1.07)

By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
STANDING WITH THEM	1d (\$0.02)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY	2d (\$0.04)
READY FOR THE KING	
(<i>For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated</i>)	1/6d (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH	
(<i>For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated</i>)	2/- (\$0.43)

By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE (<i>The Way of Salvation</i>)	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST	9d (\$0.16)

By W.N.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE	3d (\$0.05)
WASTE!	2d (\$0.04)

By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF	2d (\$0.04)
THIS MINISTRY	
(<i>Series of Messages given at Honor Oak</i>)	
Volume II.	9d (\$0.16)
Volume III.	1/- (\$0.21)

POSTAGE AND PACKING. For postage and packing please add the following to the total amount of the books ordered :

	In the United Kingdom.	Elsewhere (except U.S.A. & Canada)
Single copies of booklets price 4d and under	2d	1½d
Single copies of booklets price 6d to 9d	4d	2d
Single copies of booklets price 1/- to 1/6	6d	3d
<i>Otherwise—</i>		
Orders totalling less than 5/- please add	4d in the shilling	2d in the shilling
Orders totalling between 5/- and £2 please add	2d in the shilling	1d in the shilling
Orders totalling more than £2 please add	2/- in the £	1/- in the £

In U.S.A. and Canada.

Single copies of booklets price \$0.30 and under please add 2 cents. Otherwise please add 4 cents in the dollar.

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to THE EDITOR, A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY, 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23.

Literature may be obtained from:—In U.S.A.—Mr. H. E. Almquist, Christian Literature Stores, 809, Fourth Ave. South, Minneapolis 4, Minnesota or Olivet House, 1505 South Westmoreland Ave., Los Angeles 6, California.—In India—Dr. A. I. Kinnear and Mr. A. J. Flack 6, Brunton Road, Bangalore, or from Evangelical Literature Service (Mr. Donald J. David), 1/24, Vepery High Road, Madras.

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

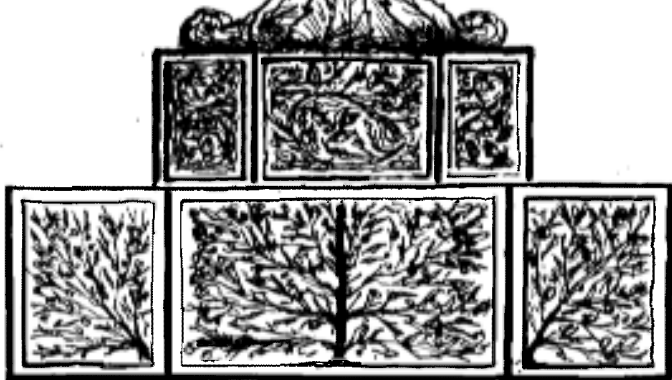
The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone: FOrEst Hill 4609.

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

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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



THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



MAY — JUNE, 1957.

Vol. 35. No. 3.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	...	...	...	49	THE ISRAEL OF GOD (III)	...	...	...	59
FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY (VI)	...	...	...	51	SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE	...	...	...	62
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE	...	...	...	54	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	...	...	...	66
					THE GOD OF THE AMEN	...	...	...	67

EDITORIAL

Beloved friends,

So many of you have been praying much for us over these past months of far-flung ministries, and I feel it is due to you to let you know how wonderfully the Lord has answered your prayers. It has indeed been a time of tremendous demands and opportunities, but, once again, we have a glowing testimony to the Lord's faithfulness and mercy. It is quite impossible to give a full account of these first three months of the year in the Far East, and we feel reticent in speaking about it at all lest, on the one hand, our motives should be misunderstood and, on the other hand, Satan should react to injury. It is *not* boasting, but just giving you occasion to glorify God.

'Spontaneous expansion' is a term which has gained currency in the realm of Christian enterprise. It is a fascinating idea and captivates the imagination. It is the one thing more than any other which is desired and sought. The defining of it may result in conflicting conceptions and interpretations. To be absolutely true to the very words, surely it means that kind of expansion and growth which cannot be attributed—in the first place—to human effort, organization, machinery, institutions, publicity, propaganda, business acumen, financial support, etc., but is just the organic expression of *life*, and that, in this connection, the mighty life of the Holy Spirit. In spite of rocks, storms, blasts, and many inimical and opposing forces, human and satanic, it just goes on expanding, multiplying, increasing, and growing. Without noise, display, or demonstration, the greatest and most persistent opposition is made as though it did not exist—in the long run and ultimate issue. There is "the hiding of his power" so that, while very great difficulties and opposition are overcome, it is never as by an earthquake, cataclysm, or display. The power of the Spirit is so great that He never has to call attention to it, and even those most closely related are left wondering as to what He has done and how He did it.

It is a wonderful thing to be in the way of these 'goings of God'. In our own case and *this* ministry the history of these past thirty years has been very much like that. There could not have been less of the natural factors and features which men would regard as essential to the growth which has so silently taken place; from something so small and local to something which has reached literally

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to the ends of the earth and into all nations ; something to which people of God, servants of God, in so many different places and connections, bear testimony as to its spiritual helpfulness. On the other hand, we have wondered whether anything could have more opposition in every form, human and satanic.

But this is not about ourselves. We have just returned from a further three months in the Far East, and there, once more, we have beheld "the wonderful works of God". Day after day in continuous sessions we have been privileged to minister to some five hundred and more hand-picked and specially selected Christian (Chinese) workers ; and night after night to about 2,000 to 2,500 believers and workers. We have, in addition, spent a whole week in visiting assemblies in many places, sometimes three or four in a day, where the believers, radiant in Christ, awaited our arrival and eagerly devoured the ministry. All this work and these assemblies—ranging in numbers from one to sixteen hundred—have 'spontaneously' arisen and are spontaneously growing. A principle and maxim of the servant of God who was His instrument in the beginning of this work—even when it was growing very greatly—was 'Try to keep things small. Never try to make the work big. If it is of God it will grow in spite of everything. We must fill the trenches with water. If it is not of God we do not want it.' That principle is held to and enunciated to-day. I refrain from giving many details or even a general presentation of this work, for publicity is dangerous. Our range of ministry was the Philippines, Formosa, and Hong Kong, but the work reaches wider ranges.

No work or believers could have had greater opposition, or have been made to suffer more than those related to this work. Politically, spiritually, and—grievous to say—from Christian bodies, it has suffered almost unbelievably, but on it goes by the momentum of inherent spiritual life, by the power of the Spirit of Life.

If the secrets are sought, we would say unhesitatingly and with deep knowledge that they are four.

1. The deep inward work of the Cross in the life of the believers, individually and collectively.
2. The sovereignty and government of the Holy Spirit in all direction and government.
3. A true and clear conception and expression of the Church as the Body of Christ, a spiritual organism on heavenly ground.
4. "The fellowship of his sufferings", a counting of all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, a life of sacrifice and abandon to His interests and glory.

If the question is asked 'Is there no organization in such a great work?', we say at once, Yes, there is, and it is as near perfect as anything we have known. *But*, there is a difference. The 'organization' (if you must use that word) never *produced* or preceded the work or the life. It is just the *order* into which life must be directed to prevent confusion. A garden full and overflowing with living organisms requires *direction and control* to make it beautiful, but you do not begin with your controls and then try—*by means of them*—to get life. When someone referred to the order in their work and used the word "organization", a leading responsible brother just quietly said 'But we are not conscious of the "organization", we are only conscious of that which makes it necessary'.

Well, it is a joy in these times to be in that which has ever been our vision and prayer, albeit fraught with such cost, a work for which the Spirit of God takes responsibility. May it be preserved unsullied and unspoiled.

We do most deeply thank all of you for the faithful prayer-support and encompassing during these weeks of such heavy demands, physically and spiritually, and we are so happy to say—'You have not prayed in vain'!

Within a few days of our return we were launched into the Easter conference at Honor Oak. This was a time marked by the presence and blessing of the Lord in a very real way. The numbers were larger than ever. A considerable number of countries were represented. In addition to friends from various parts of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, there were those from Germany, Holland, Denmark, France, Finland, Switzerland, India, China, etc.

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

The Lord led us to circle round the question of Isaiah liii. 1. "To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Through the eleven meetings we considered the various applications of the Cross which secure and provide the ground upon which the arm of the Lord can be revealed.

When we came to the end we felt that, in a very real way, that arm had been revealed to us over that season, and we were living in the good of its fulfilment in the case of God's Beloved Son, the suffering, but now exalted Servant of Jehovah. Surely the great need of our time is a new revealing of that mighty arm, and, just as surely, *if God has His ground*, He will reveal it. We have seen that to be true in these recent months.

Again, warm thanks for all your prayer and fellowship.

Yours in the grace of our Lord Jesus,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY

VI. LIGHT THROUGH DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Reading: Isaiah lx. 1-14.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come".

WE are familiar with the fact that there is usually a twofold interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures. There is the historical, and there is the spiritual: on the one hand, that which is after the flesh, and on the other hand, that which is after the Spirit. To a large extent, it is on the one hand that which relates to Israel naturally, and on the other hand that which relates to the Church, and to Christ, as seen through and beyond Israel.

This, of course, is very apparent in the Prophets. Sometimes you do not know whether the prophet is speaking about himself, or about Israel, or about Christ. That very problem arose with the Ethiopian in the chariot in the desert, when he asked Philip: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?" (Acts viii. 34). Many have thought that Isaiah liii related to Israel. It is perfectly clear that, while there might be a measure of truth in that, that is not the whole truth by any means. Here, as always, there are two interpretations, and what is true of that chapter is very true in the chapter from which we have read. It is said that this chapter relates to the remnant of Israel which will be found at the end in Jerusalem. We will not call that into question, but it is almost impossible not to see that there is another side to Isaiah chapter lx, and it is that other side with which we are to be occupied at the present time.

Here is Zion, and Zion's light and Zion's wealth. You are very familiar with that name, and you know that our New Testament tells us that we "are come"—not that we are coming, not that we

are 'marching to'—but that we "*are come*" to Zion, "the city of the living God" (Heb. xii. 22). And yet I suppose it is true that we are in a sense on the way to Zion, not as a place, but as a state of spiritual fulness. But if it is true that we are already come to Zion—and we will not for a moment dispute with the Apostle who says it—then may it not be equally true that the things that are said in the Old Testament, and here particularly, about Zion, if they refer in part to some later literal Zion on this earth, certainly refer more to the Zion to which we have come. The exhortation therefore is to the people of this Zion, this "city of the living God", to which we "are come"—indeed, of which we are a part. The exhortation is to us: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come".

LIGHT THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF RESURRECTION

Let us look for a moment at the ground and the nature of this light which has come to us. Again we are brought back to this open door to everything. Here everything begins and here the light bursts forth—the resurrection of our Lord, and our resurrection with Him. May I recall to your mind that wonderful twentieth chapter of John's Gospel. I confess that there is no chapter in the Bible which moves me more than that one. But to me the special thing about it is the breaking light. From the early morning, even before it was day, there were hearts in darkness waiting, longing; and then it is as though, after the very dark night, the sun suddenly rises over the horizon, begins to throw its shafts of rays over the skies. We see the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

day opening, the light breaking and spreading, and one by one the disciples are caught in its rays. And what a transformation! Surely they did 'arise and shine', for their Light had indeed come!

Now, the setting of this chapter in Isaiah is just like that. There is a fragment in it in which we read about God's wrath, the dark night of God's wrath, which had passed (vs. 10b). Certainly the people had been (to use the language of Ezekiel) in a dark grave in their exile and captivity afar off. It was a dark night—a night of spiritual death; and it was therefore death to Zion during that time. Zion was dead and buried for that whole period of the captivity. But here, again using Ezekiel's language, the graves had been opened; resurrection had taken place. Isaiah is the prophet of resurrection, looking through and beyond the Cross. Here, in the latter part of his prophecies, we see the shadows departing and the morning breaking, and hear this triumphant cry—as the sun arises—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come".

It is on that ground of resurrection that the light comes, and that gives to the light its character. That being its ground, its nature is of that kind. We shall see, as we go on, how tremendously potent this light was—what it did. Here is light that is not just a mental grasp of things. It is certainly not the light of collected truth, of studied matter, of the intellect, even in the things of God. It is a different kind of light altogether. I want to press this—it is not just a statement of things. Dear friends, *light*, if it is to be as effective as the light in this chapter was shown to be, *has got to be of this kind*—the light of resurrection. You may collect what is given out in public ministry into your notebooks with your own ministry in view, and go and retail it. *That will not be light of this kind*. Too often, when we are reading and when we are listening, we have other people in view. We are thinking of how we are going to get this over to some others, and thereby we are more concerned for ministry and work, and having material to give others, than we are for the fundamental matter of Christlikeness.

But the fact is that all real light springs from the realities of Christ as born in our own experience. Quite clearly, in the case of Israel or the remnant, and certainly even more so in the case of the Church, this light is the light that springs out of a deep experience, from which and through which resurrection was the only answer. If God had not done what He said He would do for the remnant—He said, "Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of

Israel" (Ezek. xxxvii. 12)—if the Lord had not opened their graves and brought them out, this part of Isaiah's prophecy would not have been written, because there would have been nothing to write about. It would never have been possible on any ground to say, "Thy light is come". The meaning of this is—"You have been in the dark and you have been delivered; you have been in death and have come to know the power of resurrection".

RESURRECTION
FAITH'S ULTIMATE POINT

And therefore the very nature of light which is light indeed, light after this order of life, light which is to have this effect, is that it is born out of an experience, or out of continuous experiences of resurrection. One thing we have been trying to say all through these meditations is just this, that, through the necessitated exercises of faith again and again, we have got to reach the ultimate goal of faith, and the ultimate, the final issue of faith is resurrection. When the writer to the Hebrews is recounting the faith, and the faith activity, of those of old, and is dealing with Abraham, the last stage in Abraham's faith that is mentioned is that in which he received Isaac back as from the dead. That is always the ultimate point to be reached by faith.

This is not faith in the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor is it faith in the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is faith in the resurrection of Christ as a *present active power*. The resurrection of Christ has, so to speak, to be brought up to date. It has not merely to be remembered once a year at Easter. This is no merely sentimental thing. It is to be something for every day of our lives. Every new morning has to be a new occasion for our proving the power of His resurrection. It has to be so: and if so, then there will be a necessity for it. The Lord will keep us on the ground of a necessity for knowing resurrection power and resurrection life.

If you are in any way engaged in ministry, or the work of the Lord, no matter how much you study, how much you read up the subject matter, however diligent you are in your research, it will count for nothing if there is not behind it an experience which makes resurrection—that is, a deep experience which makes resurrection the only way out. The Lord has no place for mere mechanical teachers and preachers, reproducers of matter secondhand. The Lord's principle is to bring everything right into experimental relation-

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

ship to the person concerned, and so it is kept in power and freshness and reality.

So the very setting of Isaiah lx—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee"—is that of resurrection, in the experience of the people concerned. Let me repeat: Do not be more concerned with ministry than you are with knowing Him—and the only way to know Him is the power of His resurrection. You may be sure that, if you have this as the basis and background of your life, you will have ministry without the need of research! I am not saying that study is not important: what I am saying is that, while it may have its place, there has got to be something more than that. There has got to be the *experience* of the thing that we are saying—the experience of life saving us in deep and desperate situations. That is the ground upon which the Lord keeps His true servants. For, after all, light is not something objective to us. Light is what we are—"Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14)—and what we are through deep history with God in our lives. So God makes us lights.

EFFECTIVE LIGHT

Therefore, the light that is mentioned here is light which is vital, light which is pure, which is effective. Note that the rest of this chapter shows how effective the light is. What tremendous effectiveness is related to this kind of light, born out of an experience of resurrection. Underline all the words in this chapter which refer to *wealth*—"the abundance of the sea", "the wealth of the nations" (v. 5b), gold and frankincense (6b), silver and gold (9), and so on. That is the value, the effectiveness, of light after this kind. It means the possession of wealth. It means resources for the enrichment of people.

Do believe this: If you want to be able to help people, to enrich them, to bring them into the wealth that is in Christ, to deliver them from their poverty—and God knows how poverty-stricken His people are, and how little they know of His wealth—if you want to help others to a knowledge of this wealth, it is by way of the light which comes through resurrection. In more simple terms, if you are going through a deep and dark time, you may have very rich treasures of darkness. The right attitude toward our times of death and darkness is that this can mean wealth—the Lord means more riches out of this thing for others; something for their enrichment, is going to come out of our times of spiritual death. It is effective light that enriches, that brings into wealth.

ATTRACTIVE LIGHT

And then note again how it attracts. "Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms" (4b); "... the ships of Tarshish . . . to bring thy sons from far" (9a); and so on. They are all coming, they are all coming. Why? Because you have got something to give, you have got the light which answers to their problems and their questions and their difficulties. As the light attracts the moth, so need is attracted to where there is supply. Out of these experiences of death and darkness, leading to resurrection, comes something that others want. And it is like that, if it is after that order, they come for it—yes, from the ends of the earth. Not just for teaching, for interpretations, for doctrines, but for real, living light born out of experience, the experience of resurrection, again and again.

I do not believe that it is necessary to have tremendous attractions of other kinds to get people together for spiritual purposes. I believe that, if there is real vital light, they will come, they will find their way to it. The answer to empty churches is not entertainments and attractions, but living light. That can be proved. Would there were more light—then there might be a drawing.

THE WORD APPLIED TO A CORPORATE VESSEL

Now this word, while of course it applies, as it must always apply, to individuals, because you can have nothing collective unless there are individuals to make it so, is a word to a company, a group; it is a word to a collective vessel of life. 'Zion' is something corporate and collective, and the Lord wants these vessels, these vessels of light, after this kind. My point in saying that is this, that we not only go through deep and dark and trying experiences individually, but we go through them in relation to our fellow-believers. There is such a thing as companies of the Lord's people going deep down into experiences where only the power of His resurrection can meet the need. Let us therefore realise that we are sharers in this ministry, that we are involved in something that may not just be personal.

Perhaps you are thinking, 'Oh, that is all out there in the air—it may relate to somebody or something, somewhere. I am just nothing, I do not signify; all that has nothing to do with me'. But it has in a related way. You are a part of that Body of Christ which is to be the expression of His risen life, and therefore you have a share in the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

suffering which comes upon the people of God : hence the necessity for knowing His resurrection-power. And we are suffering together with Him. Let us remember that. ' Together ' means not only that we are suffering with Christ: we are *suffering together*—with Christ. It is our collective or corporate suffering with Christ—just as the reigning also is to be collective and corporate. Suffering together, we reign together with Him (Rom. viii. 17b ; II Tim. ii. 12). It is the Church that is in view.

So what might never come to us individually and personally comes to us by reason of our relationship with something much bigger than the Lord wants to use. We become involved in something that is not, after all, our own personal responsibility. The Lord is after a vessel, and we are a part of the vessel ; and in a related way we have got to know this power of His resurrection, that the light may shine.

Yes, these things concern and relate to the Church. But many of you who read these words are just individuals, or twos or threes, scattered in distant places, and you might have some thought in the back of your minds—' Well, that is for the Church, he is speaking about the Church, all that is concerning the Church. I am just one lonely one somewhere—we are just two or three together in some remote place. We cannot be regarded as the Church, and therefore—to some degree—all this can hardly apply to us.'

So it is necessary to say a corrective word about that, and the best way of doing so is to remind you that when Paul wrote his final letters to Timothy and Titus, mainly to and about the Church, he did not write them to any one collection of Christians in any one place, nor did he write them just to several large companies of Christians. They were for *all* Christians, whether in companies or scattered and alone, and they have remained that ever since. Paul thought comprehensively and inclusively of all believers, and just called them ' the Church '—that is all. They may have been here and there or in many places, just ones or twos or

little groups, or there may have been the larger assemblies ; but as far as he was concerned they were all the Church. What he had to say applied to them all—for this reason, as we shall emphasize later : that he never at that time thought of them finally as on this earth. So far as geography and time were concerned, he had got completely away from earth conditions, from the merely physical, and he was seeing the Church from the standpoint of God and Heaven, as one thing. And so this matter of scatteredness and individual situation did not come into the thing at all, except in this way, that every fragment, wherever it was, was a part of a whole, as in Heaven ; so that everything applied to every fragment.

The practical value of that as I said earlier, is this, that wherever we are and however alone we may be, we may yet be involved in all that the Church is involved in. You may be in a remote place alone, but you are bound up with all that relates to the Church, all that is happening to the Church, all that the Church is knowing, that the Church is suffering, that the Church is called to. You are bound up with it, you are in it ; you are not apart from it, wherever you may be. It is necessary for you to grasp that and say, ' Although I am here, alone or with another, in this remote place, I am as much a part of the whole of the Church as that group at so-and-so, or any other group.'

For in the Spirit, and in the heavenlies, you are always in the whole congregation of the Church. You may not see them, may not have, perhaps, the extra benefits of close personal fellowship and association with all the others on the earth, but you are in the whole Church, wherever you are, a part of the congregation. You see, we " are come . . . to the general assembly and church of the first-born ones " (Heb. xii. 23) ; and that means not just a few somewhere in one place, or even a big crowd in some place. It means all the children of God. We are *all* come to the general assembly, the Church of the firstborn ones. It is said to us all, wherever we are.

T. A-S.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Reading : Haggai i. 1 - ii. 9.

" Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord ; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadek, the high priest ; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work : for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts " Haggai ii. 4.

" **B**E strong . . . and work ". If it is always important to keep a verse in its proper context, in this case it is particularly so, for otherwise the exhortation can be used to support any kind of enterprise. The verse means more than just a call to be earnest and get busy, very much more than that.

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

To find the real meaning we must consider its historical setting, seeking to understand the experiences of those to whom Haggai's message came, and the objective of the call to action.

THEIR PAST HISTORY

We notice first of all that the message was spoken to the redeemed people who had but recently returned from captivity. The movement from Babylon illustrated God's power to redeem even as did the exodus from Egypt, but it was different in many ways from that redemption and stressed certain aspects of the great redeeming work of Christ. We may say that Haggai's hearers knew redemption as:

1. A PERSONAL CALL

In a sense the exodus from Egypt represented a mass movement; the people all came out together. In the case of the return from Babylon, only a remnant of the whole was involved. Every one was eligible, but each man had to face the personal issue and make his own decision whether to stay or to go. Those who did move out were only a small proportion of the whole nation; they amounted to less than 50,000. The people of whom we are speaking were the people of God whether they stayed or whether they went. So, the challenge to which they had responded was more than the general one of belonging to the Lord; it was a special call to each one individually to step out in absolute obedience to Him.

2. A RENUNCIATION OF COMFORT

The deliverance from Egypt was largely a matter of being freed from what was irksome and painful, from the bitter bondage of their life there. Salvation certainly does mean that. If ever we want to go back to the old life, it is only because we have forgotten what it was really like, as the Israelites sometimes did. So far as we know, however, there was nothing irksome for the Jews in Babylon; on the contrary, they were comfortably prosperous there. All those back in the land, therefore, were men who had sacrificed something for the Lord. Redemption for them meant not so much deliverance from suffering as renunciation of comfort. They could still have been the Lord's people and yet have stayed in Babylon if they had wanted to. But they did not want to. They loved the Lord too much, and were anxious to do what pleased Him, so they set out gladly on their arduous journey, giving up home and personal ease for

love of Him. The question they asked was not whether it was possible to stay where they were and not be lost, but whether there could be more gain for God if they moved out and on. Would to God that there were more Christians who felt and acted like this!

3. A DEFINITE UNDERTAKING

When the Israelites emerged from Egypt they had very vague ideas as to what it was all about. They were fleeing from the house of bondage, yes. They were coming out to worship the Lord, yes. More than this they did not know. When we are first saved we are largely in the same position. We know that we are delivered and that now we are on the Lord's side, but otherwise we are rather vague as to what it is all about. Some never get beyond this vagueness. Those who left Babylon, though, had nothing vague as to their objective; they left for one sole purpose—to return to Jerusalem and there to restore the House of God. The terms of the king's decree stated this quite clearly, so that they were men with a definite goal and with clear ideas of what that goal was.

4. A WAY OF FAITH

Those to whom Haggai spoke had reached their present position by a way of faith. When the Israelites came up from Egypt, they too had to learn to trust God. Yet at the same time He did wonderful miracles for them. The wilderness story is studded with gems of Divine interventions. They enjoyed much of the supernatural. Although they were a most undeserving people, and although some of the greatest miracles had been preceded by their worst complaints against the Lord, the fact remains that all along the desert way God had worked wonders for them. It was not like this when the remnant returned from Babylon. The way was no easier—it may even have been worse. They needed Divine providence to bring them through as much as ever their forefathers had needed it, and the Lord brought them safely through. This time, however, there was nothing sensational to see. It just 'happened' in more ordinary ways. The "liers in wait" did not molest them. Later on, when Ezra himself brought a further party along that perilous road, he might have had a band of soldiers and horsemen to help against the enemy, but he prayed instead, for he was "ashamed" to trust in men. A healthy kind of shame this, to be ashamed not to trust the Lord! They came through. They proved the Lord. Never-

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

theless it had to be by sheer faith, without any signs from Heaven.

THEIR PRESENT WEAKNESS

It is clear, then, that Haggai's audience were men who had had an experience with God. Yet at the time of which we speak they were in great weakness and defeat. Something had gone wrong. They had not been weak at first, far from it. What had reduced them to their present condition?

STRENGTH BY THE ALTAR

They began in great strength. There is a verse which describes their first action, a verse which is full of spiritual significance—"They set the altar upon its base; for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries" (Ezra iii. 3). From the beginning they realised that they were surrounded by perils, so they sought protection by setting up the altar. They did not act as ordinary men who first set up walls of fortification behind which they can shelter. They were not ordinary men, but were men of faith, so that to them the greatest safeguard was a central, inner, spiritual relationship with God. And they were right. The altar brought God in on their side. Those early days were great days, and the people a strong people, because of the central position given to the altar.

There are all sorts of definitions and explanations about what the altar means to us, but for our purposes Romans xi. 36 is enough: "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever". Put in its simplest terms that is what it amounts to: everything of God, and everything for God. Everything of God—that is why the altar is a place of death, for there is much about us not of God which must be slain and put out of the way. Everything for God—involving devotion to the will of God even to the utmost limits of sacrifice. It is true that the altar is the place of slaying, but it is also the place of supreme blessing. It brings us on to the Lord's side. It means that God is with us. There can be no stronger position than this.

This is a most important point, this beginning with the altar, especially when we are engaged in building work. We are so apt to try to get people together and shape them into some sort of formation which seems to represent the house of God. No, the external arranging is not the first activity by any means. The first thing is to obtain a right spiritual condition at the heart of things. This right relationship is the secret of spiritual strength.

They began there, and at the first they were not moved from the ground of the altar, even though the temptation that came to them was very crafty.

A SUBTLE ATTACK

The first effort to unsettle them was not a frontal attack at all, but a subtle temptation to compromise over the purity of their spiritual position. Their Samaritan adversaries came in the guise of friends, offering to co-operate in the work of building. It seemed to them a great and promising movement. It even had official support. They did not wish to miss the popularity and interest of it all. When things seem to be going well there are always plenty of offers of help from men of mixed motives.

The Samaritans were certainly that. It would take a long time to describe their whole story, but the fundamental consideration was their impure origin; they did not belong by birth to the people of God. They were strangers who had been introduced as colonists, they were not true born, so that while some of them may have possessed a certain amount of Israelitish blood, it was very mixed. This was not in dispute: everybody knew it. Indeed we have it on the authority of Josephus that when the Jews were in prosperity the Samaritans claimed to be allied to them in blood, but that when they saw them in adversity they declared that they had no relationship to them, but were descended from the Assyrian immigrants. Yet these were the people who now claimed a right to have a share in holy things.

They were impure also in religion, for they had only taken up the Jewish religion because it was convenient for them in their worldly affairs. As colonists they found much that was against them, so they decided to adopt the local religion in the hopes that by this means their life would be made more tolerable. At best it was a mere outward form, but they were not even consistent in this, for we are told that "they feared the Lord, and served their own gods". The Holy Spirit begins this section by calling them adversaries (Ezra iv. 1). This was their true nature though probably the Jews did not know this at first. Yet they were delivered from the trap by their simple determination to remain true to the altar. Up to this point they were still a strong people.

SATANIC FRUSTRATION

It might be argued that they were being exclusive, that their faithfulness to the altar was ex-

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

treme. Be that as it may, their action soon revealed the true character of their would-be 'friends'. "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose" (Ezra iv. 4, 5). This is the first mention of weakness. For the moment, though, it was an honourable weakness, for it represented a satanic reaction to their determination to be true to the Lord. We notice that their difficult position was greatly aggravated by the bad name which their city had, for the official decree banning the work was based on the unwise conduct of former Jews. The Devil can usually find some excuse, or even an apparently just argument by reason of the foolishness of some of God's people, when he is out to stop the work, but let us have no illusions about the essential aim behind all the opposition; it is to rob God of something more for His glory.

LACK OF HEART

There was another cause of weakness which was definitely their fault. When the foundations of the temple were laid, there was widespread regret and complaint. Haggai alludes to this, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?" (Haggai ii. 3). They could not see the significance of the work. They were without appreciation of the true value to God of the house which they were building. So they easily gave up. It is vital for us to know the importance to God of what we are engaged in, otherwise we may keep busy in the work while things go on smoothly, but as soon as the foe gets busy we are bound to lose heart. We go all to pieces if what we are doing does not seem to matter very much. ". . . as nothing. YET now be strong . . ." went on the prophet. It may seem a small temple but do not be weak about it. It matters much to God. It obviously matters much also to His enemies. Do not be weak. You will be if you do not know the significance of your calling.

THEIR STRANGE EXPERIENCES

It may be helpful to notice some striking facts about this period of inertia when the work was suspended. The first of them is that there was no animosity against private building. There were no bad feelings, and there were no rules and regulations against a man building a new house for himself, no, not even if it was a house as big as the

temple. Nobody minded the size, and nobody obstructed the work so long as it was for men and not for God. "Is it a time" asked Haggai, "for you yourselves to dwell in your cieled houses?" (i. 4). "Cieled houses" presumably means permanent, well-built dwellings, perhaps constructed of the very wood which had originally been brought for the temple, since Haggai had to appeal for volunteers to go up into the mountain to cut down fresh timber. In any case, the special point of emphasis is the peaceful atmosphere, the contented enemy, the facility for building, so long as nothing was being done for the house of God. It was not that the people were idle; they had, in fact, worked very hard, though without much result. The trouble was that they had become weak about the one essential work to which they had been called.

The next point to notice is their complete misunderstanding of the nature of their difficulties. They thought that circumstances were against them. That is why they said it was not the time to build. Not only was there a decree against such building, but personal affairs absorbed all their time. They were very busy with their husbandry and commerce, and even so could hardly make ends meet. How could they be expected to build God's house when all their time and strength was being used up in a losing economic struggle? Circumstances were too much for them, and it seemed that the Lord's work must wait until they had more leisure and opportunity. Really, however, it was not circumstances but the Lord who was against them. He had to be, to bring them to their senses. It may sound strange that the Lord should be against His own people, and especially against those who had already sacrificed so much for Him, but these were the facts. Happily they saw the point and so adjusted themselves that he was able to change his message to, "I am with you, saith the Lord". Circumstances will always argue against our devotion to the Lord if we let them. But if we put the Lord's interests first, He guarantees to deal with our circumstances. ". . . from this day will I bless you" (ii. 19).

Why had the Lord frustrated them? They had given up the work of building out of fear, and the Lord is always against fear. They had been governed by selfish considerations, and the Lord is always against selfishness. Furthermore, there was contradiction in their lives; they were contradicting the very reason for their being in Jerusalem. The Lord could bless the Jews who had remained in Babylon because within their measure—a limited measure it is true—yet within their

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

measure they were being true to Him. Here in Jerusalem that was not the case. They were being false to their profession. The Lord has to be against those who talk but do not act.

The third striking fact which relates to this period is that the local hold-up was hindering and delaying the end of the age. By a swift transition common to the prophets, Haggai passed from the local to the eternal. It seems that in some vital though unexplained manner, the house of which he spoke pointed on to the latter glory. The inference is clear, namely that the immediate and local always bears on the spiritual and eternal. The great purpose of God can be delayed by our weakness or self-interest.

FAITH'S ENERGY

Happily, Haggai's explanation seems to have brought the people to their senses. They had their eyes opened to the real reason for their lack of prosperity, and as to why in spite of all their efforts they were accomplishing nothing. So they rose up to build in sheer faith. There was still no change in their circumstances; the prospects were no brighter; the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree had not brought forth (ii. 19). They no longer waited for improvement in their personal affairs, but left them while they got on with the Lord's business. His immediate response was one of blessing, "... from this day will I bless you". It is always like that. If we wait for our circumstances to get better we shall never do the Lord's work. If we ignore our circumstances in favour of His interests, they will seem to get better of themselves.

There had been no rescinding of the official decree. The government was still against them. This, too, they ignored, feeling sure from the prophet's exhortation that God would be with them if only they took up the work anew. Not that the enemy had given up. It was not as easy as that. The opposition was just as real as ever; as soon as they rose up the enemy rose up too. But now God was on their side, and granted them providential protection. He will often do that if only we go forward in faith. It was only a respite while the matter was referred back, but yet it was a miracle. "But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease till the matter should come to Darius" is Ezra's way of describing it. We do not know the reason for this decision. It may have been due to some friendly influence, or more probably to some cautious counsel of those who were afraid to do

the wrong thing. The point to us is that when the Lord's people acted in faith the Lord Himself took the matter up.

When Haggai stood up in Jerusalem and gave the people God's assurance "I am with you", he was not speaking of mere emotion. It was no temporary emotion of a big meeting, no thrill of enthusiasm to make them feel the presence of God and so have their morale raised. "I am with you" is not necessarily a feeling. When we have it, it is a very nice feeling. But it is more, much more than what we feel. It means that Heaven is on the move, that the sovereign power of God's throne is exercised on behalf of the enterprise to which we are committed. That is what it meant for them. The official ruling was cancelled. In some wonderful way all the records of Jerusalem's bad history were overlooked, and other documents were found in the archives which were favourable to the enterprise. So wonderful is God's overruling power. New and favourable decrees were issued. Not only was the work permitted to go on, but the enemies were severely threatened and ordered to assist it. Not for the first time were the adversaries of the Lord made to regret their opposition, and to have the mortification of finding that they had actually given new impetus to the work which they had meant to destroy. So the impossible had happened. Without anything to go on but the Word of God, and rising up in whole-hearted obedience to that Word, the people were strong—by faith—and they worked. In this they provide a challenge and an inspiration to us all.

BE STRONG AND WORK

There are many applications and lessons for us. There is the reminder of the peril of what is purely personal. When Haggai challenged the Jews about their selfish interests, they might well have resented such a charge. They were not ordinary Jews. They had left ease and comfort for the Lord's sake; they had sacrificed much for Him; until the official ban was placed on the task they had worked hard. And yet, was it not true that they had become absorbed in their own personal interests? That matter of the timber! No doubt they saw it lying around, and argued that since the temple construction was forbidden it would be better not to let the wood rot for lack of use. What more natural than that it should be used on their own dwellings? How specious are the arguments and how subtle the temptations, which come even to those who have given up much for the Lord. We dare not ignore this peril, for was not this the

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

crux of the temptations which came to the Lord Jesus? He had left far greater comforts than those of Babylon, when He came to this earth. His commission was a far more royal and mighty one than the decree of Cyrus. And yet, from His being 12 years old right through till He finally reached the Cross, He was fiercely assaulted with the temptation to care more for Himself than for the Father's will. He did not fail, nor need we, but it is good to recognise the danger.

It is significant that when the people left what was personal and turned to build the house, they found their true unity. No doubt when each built his own house and each cared for his own agriculture, part of their weakness and lack of prosperity was due to the scattered, uncoordinated life they lived. But as soon as they came together to the building of the Lord's house they had no need to discuss unity or to pray about it—they were united.

And they proved the Lord to be the God of the impossible. When Haggai began his call to work, every other voice cried, "Impossible"! The government said, "Impossible". The Samaritans said, "Impossible". Their poverty said, "Impossible". Yet God said, "Be strong . . . and work". Their poverty was their own fault, since they seem to have frittered away the precious treasure which

they first brought to Jerusalem. They had wasted the Lord's resources, and which of us has not? Well, this was no time for vain regrets; "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine"; the Lord has plenty of provision for those who will devote themselves to His supreme interest.

In this also He proved His sovereignty by making the attack the occasion of the ordering of new supplies by Darius: "Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, expenses be given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of . . . let it be given them day by day without fail" (Ezra vi. 8, 9). "Day by day without fail"—"the silver is mine and the gold is mine".

So it is that the Lord undertakes to stand by those who refuse to be daunted, who face the challenge of the impossible with robust faith in His Word and hearts stirred up by His Spirit. To them, enemies, threats, reasonings, poverty and difficulties do not matter, since they have heard the message, "Yet now be strong . . . and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts".

H. F.

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

III. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed . . . he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah liii. 10, 11).

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children . . . That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Romans ix. 6-8).

"Know therefore that they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Galatians iii. 7).

IN our further consideration of this matter of "his seed", "the travail of his soul"; in our seeking of a fresh apprehension of that upon which the heart of the Lord is set—a Divine and spiritual seed, born out of His travail—we will turn to another fragment of Scripture: "Know therefore that they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham."

There is one supreme characteristic of this Divine seed, and that is faith. Whether we like it

or not, Christianity rests upon one word and that word is *faith*. The beginning, the continuation, and the consummation of the Christian life rests upon that one thing—faith. It relates to salvation, initially; it relates to and governs the whole course of progress, spiritually; it relates to service; it relates to prayer; it relates to the perfecting of the believer; it relates to final victory. There is no phase, no aspect, no stage of the Christian life which is not bound up with this issue. It is, from beginning to end, at all times, in all things, just a matter of faith, and it is just here that we find the weakest point in human nature. There is no doubt about it, sooner or later, we discover that this is our weakest point. There was a time when I used to look at certain people who seemed to have natural faith, with whom it seemed not to be a difficult thing at all to believe in God, it seemed quite natural to them to believe in God, they seemed to have no difficulty about it. Here was I, born with an unbelieving heart and an infidel mind, and they seemed to have none of those difficulties. But I have lived a few years, and I have watched

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

those people, and I have seen them come to a time and a place where the most difficult thing in all the world for them was to believe God. Sooner or later we discover that this is our weakest point.

FAITH AND GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

But, on the other hand, this is the strongest point in the Divine nature. This matter of faith, then, is basic to our union with God. This strength of faith in the Divine nature, and weakness as to faith in our nature, cannot exist and obtain together in a true union, they are contradictions, they are quite against one another. And the issue is: it is either God or ourselves. Union with God always rests upon this matter of faith. The same is true of communion, the continuation of union and living in the good of it, the expression of union—communion. It is all a matter of faith. It is a matter of God's pleasure in us, and that is an important matter: "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him". Now that goes very deep. It is possible for God to bless us and to use us as instruments, but at the same time not to take pleasure in us; we are just being used by the Lord, and yet we know that the Lord is not taking pleasure in using us, He is doing it all in sheer grace and mercy. You may not be able to understand that, but it is true. Somewhere, even in the servant, there may be a reservation about the Lord, which holds up the Lord's good pleasure in His servant. There is something more than having blessing from the Lord; something even more than being used by the Lord—the Lord having delight in us. And, mark you, the point at which the delight factor comes in is just this matter of faith. It does not say 'without faith it is impossible to get any blessings from the Lord, it is impossible to do any work for the Lord', but it does say, "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to the Lord".

FAITH AND THE DIVINE VIRTUES

And then what a great number of other things depend upon and rest upon this foundation of faith. I only mention them and leave you to think them out. Love rests upon faith. Think about that. It depends upon faith, does it not? Joy rests upon faith. We know how miserable we are, if we have lost our faith, or if we have got any doubts or questions. It is only when faith is clear and bright that we are really happy. You see, joy hangs upon faith. And does not peace hang upon it? If you like, change the word for rest, that is the biblical way of putting it—rest. Peace just rests upon faith.

There is no rest or peace unless there is faith. Then again, meekness. What is the opposite of meekness? Well, it is a trying to force things, to assert ourself; doing out from ourself, trying to hold our own ground, vindicate ourself. Faith undercuts all that, does it not? We need not worry at all about anything, we can be perfectly restful about issues if we have faith. Patience—well, it is so obvious, is it not? Patience rests upon faith. Those two things are put together in the Word of God. And so are all the other things—hope and long-suffering and kindness—all the Divine virtues rest upon the foundation of faith. And if the faith is not there, these other things are either wanting or they are weak. It is a tremendous matter, this matter of faith. If you look in the Bible you will see that all the tragedies and the calamities there resulted from a lack of faith. The first great tragedy and calamity of what is called the Fall came about simply because faith failed, was not there. Israel's tragedy in the wilderness?—it was the same reason. Israel's going into exile and captivity?—the same reason. And perhaps worst of all, it is the cause of Israel's present setting aside. There are personal instances, such as Abraham's lapse resulting in Ishmael, and the bringing in of a perpetual open sore in the history of God's interests in this world. There are many more, but we pass on: the tragedies and calamities, whether personal, national, or collective, can all be traced to this one cause: a breakdown somewhere in this matter of faith.

FAITH AND THE CHARACTER OF GOD

Now faith is always faith. That may sound like a platitude, but faith will always be objective; it will always focus upon the very character of God. That is faith's focal point—the very character of God. And remember that any weakness or absence of faith—I am speaking of course about spiritual faith—is an impuning of the character of God. That is where our Bible begins: "Hath God said . . .?" Man's initial and all-inclusive breakdown began with an impuning of the character of God, a calling into question of the character of God, a throwing of doubt upon the character of God. And so it has always been, because, you see, the focal point of faith is nothing less or other than the very character of God. Whether we will believe that God is what He says He is—that is the ultimate matter in relation to faith. But it is always *faith*. We are always wanting faith to be something other than faith, trying to substitute something else, either sight, or experience, or what we get, what

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

God does for us. But God always keeps things in the realm where, after all, it is faith. He never moves out of that realm.

“TRUE ISRAEL”—THE SEED OF FAITH

Now look at the tremendous implications of this one fragment of Paul's statements on this matter of faith in Galatians iii. 7: “They which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham”—are Abraham's seed. He has said that not all they that be of Abraham are children—are the seed: “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. iii. 16). This is the true seed, the seed which is of and by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) THE COVENANT

For a moment or two let us look at this further implication of Abraham's seed with whom the covenant was made. We are referring now not to “Israel after the flesh”, but to the spiritual counterpart which, as we see in the Scriptures, is that which is born out of the travail of Christ, the fruit of His Cross, the reproduction and multiplication of Himself as *the* corn of wheat, the fruit of His having fallen into the ground and died. This is the seed. All the covenant promises made to Abraham are fulfilled and realised in Christ and His seed. We inherit all that. Of course, we are familiar with this as truth, but it all comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ, because we are the true seed promised to Abraham. Let us, then, look briefly at Abraham as God's great example of faith. God carried through the whole system of His purpose from eternity to eternity—in creation, in Redemption and in established fulfilment—through the soul of one man. Yes, Abraham rightly has a large place. It is as though God, in prospect, forced through the very soul of that man the whole plan of His Divine purpose and redemption, and it was all on the principle of faith, by a long succession of demands for faith. It is here written for our instruction.

(2) THE LAND

First, there is the promise of a land. “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee”. Then He promised him that land—“I will give thee” was His promise and His covenant. Abraham left his country and, subsequently, his father's house, and come into the land. All his life-

time he went up and down in it, dwelling in tents, and never obtained a foothold. That is true, if we view things in strict accordance with the covenant and promise. We can read the story in a few minutes, but the record covers many years.

There was plenty of scope for question and doubt through the years with all the demand for patience. The difficulties, the trials, and the adversities of many years, provided plenty of evidence for saying, ‘I have made a mistake, a fundamental mistake, I had an idea, evidently I was wrong. Something happened and I have come out on a wrong line altogether. Nothing that I imagined I was told is being supported’—there is plenty of room for all that sort of thing. We could enlarge upon it, but I do not think we could exaggerate what Abraham had to encounter in his own soul on that one question of the land.

(3) THE SEED

But that is not all, he was promised a seed—“In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed”—“thy seed”, “thy seed”, again and again that word is spoken by God in covenant to Abraham. He was promised a seed—and, not a child, not one! On natural grounds, there was little or no prospect of anything like that. His own situation utterly contradicted God's promises concerning this seed. There is plenty of room there, is there not, to have a controversy with the Lord and to have all sorts of tangles in the soul? What a mess one could get into with a situation like that! And it was not just for a day, or a week, or a month, or even a year, that Abraham had to cope with this problem.

And further, God came and repeated this, reiterated this, and focused down this matter of faith upon the child Isaac. He promised him this child when all natural hope had receded, and went away and left him with the promise for a few more years! It was just something said to him, and there was nothing to support or bear it out in actuality. God went away and left him! If the hope had receded far back to the horizon before the promise was actually crystallised, surely it has gone beyond the horizon now. God had said it would come to pass and is leaving him with *that* situation! And then, the child is given. Yes, the son is born. We know the great test of faith that came in with that period between the promise and the realisation. Even Abraham broke down and failed. We know about Ishmael, but we leave that. In spite of everything, the child is born, there is the infant, and with what wonder they must have looked at that child.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

There is the little child growing up in their home, and how they must have cherished him in the light of all that God had bound up with his life. He grows up to youth, no doubt an object of great love, care, devotion, watchfulness and expectation. And then the blow fell: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest"—God seems to be rubbing salt into the wound, does He not? "Thine only son", he had no other, "whom thou lovest . . . and offer him". Well, we need not press this further. Abraham went on, came to his very old age, and died—not having received the promise. "These all died in faith," says the writer to the Hebrews, "not having received the promises". No, he had not inherited the land, he had not seen the seed in any commensurate way, but he died in faith—that is the point. Through it all faith survived.

Now we must break off there. "They which be of faith" are Abraham's seed, *this* seed, these children, this people, this true Israel of God is on that basis, on that principle, and after that kind. Let us make no mistake about it. I started by saying, 'whether we like it or not', and we do not like it. It is the hardest, the most difficult thing, but there it is—the matter of believing God, not because of what He can do or will do, but because of what He *is*. That goes a long way, and very deep down; it tries us on everything—God's postponements, God's delays, God's seeming contradictions and paradoxes, a thousand and one things.

The end is, after all, what are we going to do about it? *Is* God? And is God *what He says He is or not?* Our interpretation, our argument, our position, our mind about things—does it really set God aside? Does it? Or is our attitude that of faith?—*God knows what He is doing.*

We could carry that into the realm of spiritual life. You know, in our spiritual lives, in our spiritual growth and the perfecting of us in the likeness of Christ, there are many things that we think the Lord ought to have removed long ago, and He has not removed them—even matters of our character. If we could, we would have God make us absolutely sinless this very moment, and He does not! He is dealing with us on the matter of faith, even over spiritual transformation. And how many other things would we have God do for His own glory, and He does not do them; for the facilitation of His own interests and work, and He does not do them. Well, either God is, or He is not; either He is faithful or He is not; either He is consistent or He is not. You see, after all, we are brought back to this question of faith. "They which be of faith" are Abraham's seed. What is Abraham's seed?—Christ and those born out of His travail. And what travail there is related to the fruit of faith! Now there is no real fruit that is not the fruit of travail, and travail is always a matter of faith.

T. A-S.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Notes of messages given at a Workers' Conference in Hong Kong in 1956.

II. CONSECRATION

AFTER we have been born again there is still much work for God to do in our lives, and there is also much service that we can render to God. But this calls for a complete surrender of our lives to Him. We need to allow Him to do His work in us; we need to allow Him to use us; and we need to allow Him to lead us over the stretch of road that lies ahead. All this demands an utter consecration of our lives to Him. It amounts to giving our consent to His working in us, to His using us, and to His directing of our ways. In dealing with inanimate objects God does not require their surrender; but in dealing with living men and women He needs to gain our consent before He can work in us, or use us, or direct our paths.

If we want to fill a bottle with medicine, the procedure is perfectly straightforward. We simply take up a bottle and pour in the medicine. But we

who are parents know that when we want to give medicine to a child, it is quite a troublesome business. We have to exhort the child, we have to entreat the child, we have to offer some reward to the child; and if all that fails we have to call the servant along, and the elder brother or sister, and the child is put on the bed, and everyone helps to hold that child down while a little medicine is poured in.

But, brothers and sisters, God does not deal with us as we parents deal with our children. If we do not want Him to do His work in us, He waits. He is extremely patient. We parents may use compulsion with our children, but God waits for our consent. Our consecration is our consent.

In the case of very many Christians, a long time elapses after their new birth before you see any evidence of their really having advanced in the way of God. After a period of perhaps ten years you still find them more or less where they were

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

before—clearly born again, possibly having acquired a certain amount of doctrinal knowledge, perhaps even actively engaged in a certain amount of ‘church work’, but as far as true spiritual values are concerned, no further on than they were at the time of their new birth. The explanation is, that there has been no handing over of the life to God. There has been no time in their history when they have had a thorough-going transaction with God and have definitely said to Him: ‘I want to be in Your hands for You to work in me and through me and for You to lead me in Your way’. Everyone who wishes to serve God must have such a transaction with Him. Only in the measure in which we allow Him to work *in* us shall we be able truly to work *for* Him; only to that extent to which we have been *laid hold* of by Him can we be *used* by Him.

Consecration is a favourite theme with many preachers. Scarcely anywhere is there a series of devotional meetings, but the subject of consecration is dealt with. In many instances, however, the emphasis is on man offering himself for ministry to God. The consecration that we are speaking of here this morning has no such emphasis. If any of you have such a conception we trust you will set it aside.

(1) THE BASIS OF CONSECRATION

When anything of consequence is undertaken by God or man, the basis of the undertaking needs to be clear. Now this matter of consecration is one of supreme importance, therefore it must rest on a solid foundation. If God requires that we surrender ourselves to Him, on what does He base His requirement? He must have ground for requiring our surrender; and we in turn must have ground for surrendering ourselves to Him. The Bible shows that the question of consecration is settled on the ground of purchase. “Ye are not your own,” says the Word in one place, “for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body.” And elsewhere it says: “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” The Bible speaks also of our being God’s “bondslaves”. A bondslave is one over whom his master has utter rights because of his having bought him. The term “bondslave” does not sound particularly pleasant, but we who have experienced the grace of the Lord know the sweetness of being His bondslaves.

The Lord has purchased us with a great price so that now no one of us has a right to himself.

The authority over our lives has passed into His hands by right of purchase. It is on this basis that He claims our surrender. At great cost, even at the cost of the precious Blood of His Son, God has bought us for Himself; and by virtue of His having bought us, the authority over our lives is neither the world’s, nor our own; it is His. He has therefore clear ground to require that we hand ourselves over to Him.

And from our side, since we are bought by Him, if we do not hand ourselves over to Him, we are acting like runaway slaves. We are like Onesimus, whom Paul sent back to his master, Philemon. Many Christians, right up to the present day, are runaway slaves. The Lord has established His rights over them by redemption, yet they refuse to recognize His legal claims. He has paid the price, but they will not let Him take possession of what is His own. This amounts to an offence against the law of the universe. We must settle this matter of God’s legal claim upon us by handing ourselves over to Him.

The one and only sound basis of consecration is a legal one. Our consecration is not based on the constraints of love, as many Christians think. They offer themselves to the Lord, or withhold, according as they sense His love or fail to sense it. But in the sight of God our consecration is not an optional matter; its legal basis is established. You have been bought as His bondslave, and whether you like it or dislike it, you belong to Him. The right to your life is not yours, but His, for He has acquired it by purchase.

(2) THE MOTIVE-POWER OF CONSECRATION

We have just said that love is not the basis of consecration. But love is its motive-power. There are slaves who realize that the authority over their lives is in the hand of their masters; and they clench their teeth and in bitterness of soul serve them. They have no love for those who own them. But you may remember that we are told in Exodus xxi of a slave who at the expiry of six years’ service could have become a free man, but he declared: “I love my master, I will not go out free.” Thereupon his master led him to the doorpost and bored his ear with an awl. By submitting to this the slave said in effect: ‘For love of my master I want to be his slave for ever’. He might have entered into liberty, but for love’s sake he repudiated his freedom. This is true consecration.

Consecration has a basis; consecration has also a motive-power. The basis is God’s redemption;

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the motive-power is God's love. There is a word which says: "I beseech you, . . . by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God". And another which says: "The love of Christ constraineth us". But why should we yield to the constraint of love? Because "One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again." Everyone who has a true experience of consecration has at least once, but possibly many times, known the touch of the love of God. Without that touch of His love upon us, consecration is a bitter thing; in fact, it is hardly a possibility. The security of our consecration depends upon its basis; but the vitality and sweetness of our consecration depends on its motive-power, i.e. the love of God. Consecration is the effect of the Lord's touch upon a life. You do not require to plead with a person who has known the Lord's love to surrender to Him. Surrender is spontaneous.

Some brothers and sisters, from their conversion right up to the present day, have never really known the love of God, so the question of their consecration has never been settled. Throughout the 2000 years of Church history, all those in and through whom He has specially wrought are those who, at least once in their life time, have felt the impact of His love. When His love touched them they had no alternative but to fall before Him and offer their all to Him. Their reaction was similar to that expressed in the hymn:—

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

When we really meet the love of God we feel that our all must be offered up to Him; yet at the same time we feel that our richest offering is as refuse in the light of His love. Let but the love of God touch us and consecration becomes a spontaneous issue.

We know that God's love and the Lord Jesus are inseparable. Our Lord is the embodiment of the love of God; so it happens that every one who really meets the love of God becomes aware of the beauty of the Lord Jesus. One who had such an experience wrote:—

"What has stript the seeming beauty
From the idols of the earth?
Not a sense of right or duty,
But the sight of peerless worth."

All who have a true experience of consecration have at least tasted something of the Lord's love, for this love is its motive-power. When you recognize what the precious Blood has purchased, you will have to plant your two feet firmly on the ground of that purchase and say: 'Lord I belong to You. There is no solid ground in the universe for me to stand on, but the ground of Your redemption. I am Your redeemed bondsman.' This is the basis of consecration, and it is a secure basis. But because of the constraint of love we can add: 'I am not only Yours by right, I am willingly Yours. I love my Master, I will not go out free'. Even if the Lord were willing to release me to-day I should say: 'I love my Master because of His love for me, and I do not want my freedom; I wish to be His bondsman for ever'.

When you meet some brothers and sisters there is always a freshness about them because they are always under the constraint of the Lord's love. In Madame Guyon's biography you read that she was always renewing her marriage vows—i.e., her love-relationship with the Lord was always fresh. Hers was a living consecration, because the motive-power of consecration was never lacking. The basis of consecration is a question of security; the motive-power of consecration is a question of vitality. The first is a question of purchase; the second is a question of love's constraint.

(3) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
CONSECRATION

But what, after all, is the significance of consecration? The Bible offers a clear answer: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice". Our consecration does not mean that we become preachers; it means that we become a "sacrifice". The "sacrifice" to which the Apostle here refers is the "burnt offering" which was offered as a "sweet savour" to God. It was His "food".

What is food? Man's food is that which satisfies man; God's food is that which satisfies God. But what was this burnt offering? The Old Testament explains clearly. It might be an ox that normally ploughed a field or pulled a cart; but one day this ox was transferred from its original environment into a totally different realm. It was killed, it was flayed, it was cut in pieces, it was washed, it was placed on the altar; and if it was acceptable

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

to God, fire consumed it to ashes. Ashes—that is the last point to which anything can be reduced; it is the end of everything. But please note, it was when the ox was completely reduced to ashes on the altar that it ascended to Him as a sweet savour and provided Him heart satisfaction.

I trust you will remember that your consecration to God does not mean that you become preachers, or workers, or that you engage in any sort of Christian activity; it means that you become a sacrifice to God. Anything offered to God in Old Testament times experienced a change of sphere and a change of use. Whatever place you may occupy before your consecration, after your consecration your place is on the altar. Whatever your particular use in the world before your consecration, after your consecration your use is to provide food for God, to provide Him with heart satisfaction.

Examine the history of the Church and see how many there have been who, before they met the impact of God's love, were like powerful oxen out in the world ploughing great fields or pulling huge carts; but when the love of God laid hold of them, they were at once on the altar, while their friends and relatives benighted the tragic waste. Many people with great gifts and bright prospects have wrecked themselves on the altar. And why? To provide food for God, to bring satisfaction to His heart. What God wants above all else is man. He wants *you*, and when you are reduced to ashes on the altar, that will be the time when a "sweet savour" will ascend to Him, and He will be satisfied in you. Brothers and sisters, that is the significance of consecration.

(4) THE PURPOSE OF CONSECRATION

We have just explained that the significance of consecration is the offering of oneself as a sacrifice to God for His satisfaction. But the New Testament sacrifice, in contrast to the Old, is a "living sacrifice." Wherever a real consecration to God has taken place, His purpose comes into evidence in the life consecrated to Him. That life becomes active for God. Our being *for* God is based on our having offered ourselves *to* God. If we have not presented ourselves as a sacrifice *to* Him, we shall never be able to do anything *for* Him. Only those who have been reduced to nothingness on the altar can serve Him acceptably.

One of the troubles in the Christianity of to-day is that numbers of Christians who have never allowed God to do His work *in* them want to devote themselves to work *for* Him. If you Christians

in this meeting to-day all offered yourselves to work for God without having first allowed Him to do His work in you, trouble would be sure to follow. Things would not turn out so badly if you were not too earnest; but if you were really earnest, the result would be that the hundred or so here present would soon be divided into ten different groups. The Christianity of to-day does not lack enthusiastic workers, but the Church lacks men and women who have first been reduced to ashes on the altar of God and thereafter have become of use to Him.

In the well-nigh 30 years of our history, we fellow-workers who have borne the main burden of the work (and we are a considerable company) have been able to keep together because, though we have not always seen eye to eye on points of doctrine, we have all—to some extent at least—learned one lesson, i.e. to let God work. Before taking in hand any work for Him we have first let Him take us in hand, and thereafter we have undertaken the work. We dare not say that we have had no differences of opinion (sometimes they have been quite pronounced); but we can conscientiously say that every one has learned something of what it means to be on the altar for God's satisfaction. For this reason we have not got into difficulty even when we have differed in our doctrinal viewpoint.

When we present ourselves to the Lord we want to remember that the significance of our consecration is that we are a sacrifice to God; but He wants us to be a "living sacrifice", i.e., He wants us to live for Him and work for Him, though all the doing will still not be our doing, but His doing through us.

(5) THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

Brothers and sisters, I wish to tell you that the result of consecration is that all our prospects are cut off. A true consecration not only ends all worldly prospects; it ends all prospects in the Christian world. And it will be put to the test by the Christian world as well as by the non-Christian world. You will be tested by a Christianity where it is possible to be 'an evangelist of world-wide reputation', or 'a doctor of divinity.' My young brothers and sisters, I hope very many of you will become truly useful men and women in the hands of the Lord, but let me warn you of a great snare that lies ahead of you—the snare of fame in the Christian world.

While I was in Manila recently, a group of keen young people pressed me to have a period of

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

fellowship with them each Sunday afternoon. Some of them were graduates of Eastern universities, others had returned from study abroad. At the outset I said to them: "I am not going to deceive you; I want to tell you the truth. In all the universe there is none who wrecks lives like Jesus Christ. During the past 2000 years I do not know how many young people have had their prospects shattered by Him. If I were to tell you what splendid prospects you have as Christians I should be misleading you. Let me tell you rather—Jesus of Nazareth wrecks the lives of all who follow Him." Brothers and sisters, do not misunderstand me when I say to every one of you here this morning: There is no place for natural ambition for anyone whose life has been really handed over to God—no future in the non-Christian world and no future in the Christian world. Dare you go this way?

I trust you will test yourselves on the five points we have mentioned. What is the basis of my consecration? Is it the fact that Christ has bought me? And what is the motive-power of my consecration? Is it the constraint of the Lord's love? And what

is its significance? Is it that, as a sacrifice to God, I may become food for His satisfaction? And is its object to give Him an opportunity to do as He wills in me, so that I may be able to do a little for Him? And has my consecration banished all expectations for this life?

Test yourselves on these five points and see where you really stand in the matter of consecration. I trust you will go home and look up the Scriptures on which our statements are based. Should you come short on any point, you can trust the grace of the Lord to make good what is lacking.

Scriptures referred to in relation to consecration:

Its basis ... I Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xiv. 8.
 Its motive-power ... Rom. xii. 1; II Cor. v. 14, 15.
 Its significance ... Rom. xii. 1; Num. xxviii. 2, 3.
 Its purpose ... Eph. ii. 10; Isa. lxiv. 8.
 Its result ... Lev. i. 9.

W. L.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE LOVE THAT COVERS

MISS Sharp disliked cleaning her typewriter. There were many other things which Miss Sharp disliked also, and she was not slow to say so. Her eyes, like her name, were sharp, especially to see other people's faults, and alas, her tongue was sharp too; almost as sharp as the pin with which she was trying to clean out the dust and inky fluff from the letters of her typewriter.

Miss Sharp liked typing, and she had been the first choice for her new post of secretary to Mr. Wise, a godly preacher and writer. Yes, she liked typing, but she did not like it when the letters got so clogged that it was difficult to tell whether it was an "e" or an "o". The "a" and the "s" too, which in any case are next to each other, had so filled up with ink that they looked almost alike. It is true that the typewriter had a brush, but that would not dislodge the dirt from between the tiny crevices, so here she was, digging away with a pin and trying to make things better. She was getting the dust out of the letters, but some of it was falling back into the machine; there were dirty marks on her hands too, and even a smudge on her face where she had wiped an inky finger.

It was then that Mr. Wise came into the room. He brought her a little packet, saying "Miss

Sharp, I wonder if you would like to try this 'Typeclean' which has been given to me. I shall be interested to hear if it is of any use". Miss Sharp opened the little packet, and was rather surprised to find that it held a lump of what looked like green plasticine. She read the directions, and found that she had to roll this out into a long strip and then put it round the arc of metal letters on the typewriter, pressing it home firmly. She read it twice and then obeyed the instructions, rather fearfully and without much hope. Imagine her pleasure then, when she pulled it up to find that it not only came away cleanly but also brought all the dirt and inky dust with it. How clean and shining the letters now were. But when she looked again at the green waxy strip she found that it had taken up all the ink into itself and looked spoiled and useless. The directions, however, said that she must not worry about this, nor throw it away as spoiled, but fold all the soiled part inwards, roll the lump into a ball and then leave it.

Next day Mr. Wise came in and asked her about the 'Typeclean'. She took up the ball and broke it open. It seemed quite clean inside. She broke it open further, half expecting to come across all the ink and dirt somewhere in the middle of it, but No,

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

it had all been swallowed up. Miss Sharp said that it seemed like a miracle. That simple lump of green plasticine had taken up all the inky smudge and banished it for ever. "Yes", Mr. Wise replied, "it does seem a miracle, doesn't it, and it reminds me of that much greater miracle, the way in which God's love in Christ has taken away all our defilement, and swallowed it up for ever". Miss Sharp was a true Christian, one who knew that her sins were forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ, so she readily agreed to what her employer said, and they talked for a while about the greatness of the love of God.

"Strangely enough", said Mr. Wise, "the text on my calendar this morning was, 'Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins.' I suppose that means that we, too, ought to be like the 'Typeclean', in forgiving and covering other people's faults." Having said this, he went back to his work, leaving Miss Sharp very hurt and angry at being reproved for her lack of love. But the more she thought of it, the more she realised that he had probably spoken in all innocence. He did not know her very well yet, so could have no idea of what a sharp tongue she had.

Miss Sharp could not forget the text. When she got home she looked it up in her Bible and found it in I Peter 4. 8. The very next verse read, "... without murmuring . . ." and in verse 11 she found that God's will is "... that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ". It was the

Lord who had spoken to her through Mr. Wise, His servant. She who had been so thankful to have her own sins covered and forgiven was all too ready to uncover and discuss the faults of others. She seemed to see herself again with her pin, picking away at every little bit of dust she could find—not in the machine this time, but in her friends and fellow Christians. She saw that this usually spread the dirt all around. She saw, too, that just as her hands got soiled and her face smudged, so this work of criticising others brought defilement into her own heart. And then she remembered how different was the effect of the cleaner; it had cleaned the letters by taking the inky dirt, covering it, hiding it and swallowing it up.

So far as her typing was concerned it was clear that she needed to throw away her pin and make use of the 'Typeclean'. So far as her whole life was concerned, it was equally clear and far more important for her to have done with her habit of sharp criticism, and make more use of the love of Christ. 'Fervent love', the text called it. As she knelt by her bedside she prayed about this, trusting the Lord to shed abroad His love in her heart by the Holy Spirit who dwelt there.

The prayer was answered. Her love for those around has cured more faults and put right more failings than ever her sharp tongue could do. It is true that down here on earth her name is still Miss Sharp, but up in heaven it has probably been changed to Miss Greatheart.

H. F.

THE GOD OF THE AMEN

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14).

"So that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth" or as the margin has it, "He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God Amen" (Is. lxx. 16).

"For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (II Cor. i. 20).

YOU will see from the passages in Revelation and Isaiah, that 'Amen' is a title, a designation, a description of God. His Name is the 'Amen', the God of the 'Amen'. We know what we mean when we use that word. We mean a note of affirm-

ation, that there is nothing from which we dissent and everything with which we agree. We are saying, 'Let it be like that—Amen!' And that is a description of God; that is His Name. The description can be summed up in one fragment of Scripture: "the Father of Lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. i. 17). He is always the same, absolutely reliable, positive, definite, sure, for He is the God of the 'Amen'.

ISAIAH LOOKS BEYOND THE CAPTIVITY AND THE CROSS

Now the contexts of these two passages are very enlightening as to the use made of the title on each occasion.

In Isaiah lxx, you will see that we are near the end of the prophecies; we are on the other side of the judgment of Israel, that is on the other side

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

of the exile and the captivity. We are with the remnant that returned. The new day is presented in such verses as:—

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Is. lx. 1).

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; that she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” (Is. xl. 1, 2).

Again, in this chapter in which our verse is found, the Lord says: “I create new heavens and a new earth” (Is. lxv. 17). A new day is in view, and on that ground, in that setting and context, these words occur. They are prospective as you see: ‘he that, then, on that ground, in that day, blesseth himself . . . he that sweareth . . . in that day, on this new ground . . .’ These words look on into the future and we may say here at once, that it is to the day which has come, to the day in which we live, that these prophecies point so clearly. The prophecies after chapter liii, the chapter of the Cross and the suffering, point so clearly to this day beyond the Cross, the day of His resurrection, the day of the Spirit; this is the day—our day—in which God is spoken of as the God of the ‘Amen’—God, re-affirming, and God re-affirmed.

But to revert to Israel’s history: it had looked for seventy long, weary, tragic, desolate years, as though everything was hopeless; all seemed lost. Look at Jerusalem during those seventy years; look at the land in its desolation and ruin, with the glory gone, everything broken down, and tragedy written large everywhere. The visitors to that country, wagging their heads, remembering the past, were saying, ‘Aha, aha; well, well; Look at this!’ And while that cry, like a sob, from the prophet: “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow” (Lam. i. 12), may be truly put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus, on the Cross, it literally relates to this very situation. It was the cry of the land.

Of such a situation we should say to-day, ‘Well, that is an end of that! There is not much prospect there.’ But it is in that setting, just in a situation like that, that these words occur. He is the God of the ‘Amen’! He is re-affirming that, despite of everything, He has not changed, He has not given up, He is not in despair. He is the God whose decisions and determinations are absolute and final, and it does not matter to those decisions what happens; He remains the God of the ‘Amen’. Here He is then, in this title, re-affirming,

that although all this has happened, a remnant shall return. There shall yet be a ‘taking root downward, and a bearing fruit upward’ (Is. xxxvii. 31). God cannot ultimately be cheated of His purpose; He is the God of the ‘Amen’.

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOD OF HOPE

Here, then, is the mighty re-affirmation or declaration, like something rising out of the ashes. Yes, there are ashes and desolation and mourning and the spirit of heaviness and all these things, yet, there arises out of the midst, an unchanged and unchangeable God.

And so we come to these words: “He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen”. What does that mean? It sounds so strange, does it not? It sounds a little awkward; but what does it mean? Well, I think it just means this, quite simply—that the ground of our hope, of our blessing, of our prospect, and of our new joy, is that God is the same for ever. We can count on Him. There never was such a terrible threat to His purposes; there never was such a seeming desolation in the realm of God’s election. And yet, and yet, He has not accepted that as an end; He has not accepted that as cancelling out what He has set His hand to do. He still remains firm, true, steadfast for ever, the God ‘Amen’. What a blessing! if only we could get hold of it. We are certainly not going to bless ourselves for this, that, and the other thing; that is, to congratulate ourselves on things. Very often it is going to be like this; that there is nothing in the appearance and condition of things in which we can bless ourselves, but that we can bless ourselves in God ‘Amen’.

Then the verse continues, “and he that *swear-eth* in the earth shall *swear* by the God Amen”. What does that mean? Well, you see, the swearing was always related to covenant, was it not? And while that would open up far too large a field for this brief consideration, the point is just this: you can commit yourself to this God, you can depend upon Him as the covenant-keeping God, and you can swear by Him. There is nothing else in all this world that you can swear by, and no one else; everything else will let you down, but you can swear by Him—God ‘Amen’—He will not let you down.

THE LORD’S INSISTENT APPEAL FOR REALITY

Turning now to the passage in the Book of the Revelation, notice the context there. Christ, the

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

Amen, is speaking to the church in Laodicea. *Laodicea*—why, that very word and name is the synonym for what is indefinite, indistinctive, weak, and mixed! “Thou are . . . neither hot nor cold”; ‘there is no distinctiveness and no definiteness about you. You are neither one thing nor the other.’ And there are a lot of other things said about Laodicea, all representing a situation that is utterly unreliable and unsatisfactory; in one word, it is false. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches,” and you do not know that it is utterly false, that “thou art . . . poor”—thou art . . . poor! You think that you can see, and do not know that you are blind. You say: ‘we are clothed; we have apparel; we have all we need’; and you do not know that you are naked before God. What a picture of falsehood. And whenever there is a falsehood, catastrophe is sure to follow sooner or later; a lie will always be found out. This is a very insecure position.

“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness”—you see, the very context interprets and explains the title. The Lord is here calling Laodicea back to that which is represented by His own name and nature. There is nothing mixed, confused and contradictory about Him. There is no falsehood with Him, nothing like this with Him, and so His call is for recovery at the end. This is the last phase. At the end He is calling His Church back to complete distinctiveness, that there shall be no doubt whatever as to where we stand, as to where we are going. It is a great thing in these days, to meet people who know exactly what they are after, with no two minds about it; they are settled; they are fixed; there is no variableness with them. It is a great thing in these days to find such people. And the Lord says, It will be a great thing if the Church can be like that in the end, if there can be such a testimony. This, surely, is the meaning of ‘overcoming’ in the case of Laodicea. ‘Overcoming’ means that all uncertainty, indefiniteness, weakness, vacillation, duplicity, and everything of that character, is eliminated. The overcomers are people who know where they stand, where they are going, what they are after, people who have got the positive note in their midst, the Amen, the note of certainty.

That is the last word of the Spirit to the Church in this dispensation. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches” (Rev. iii. 22). The last word of the Spirit to the Church in this dispensation—if we are to accept the dispensational interpretation of these messages to the seven churches—a word called out apparently by the very conditions, is this, ‘Away with all indis-

tinctiveness in your testimony, all uncertainty in your note, all indefiniteness in your goings, and let there be certainty, positiveness, confidence and assurance; let there be no beating the air, but a reaching the mark all the time.’ This is the word of the Spirit.

THE GREAT ‘AMENS’ OF CHRIST

Now you notice that this is not only a title ascribed to God in the Old Testament, but also one of the titles of Jesus in the New. It is Jesus who says, “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness”, the Amen, the I AM.

Now I am quite sure you are perfectly familiar with the fact, that on the twelve or so occasions, when Jesus said, twice over, “Verily, verily . . .”, according to our version and translation, the Greek word is “Amen”, so that we may read, “Amen, Amen, I say unto you . . .” And realising what that implies, the mighty affirmation, you can understand better the things that follow. If Jesus says, “Verily, verily”—“Amen, Amen . . . I am the door . . .”, there is a tremendous emphasis on that; in other words, you cannot get in any other way (John x. 7). Now I am not going to enlarge upon this, but you see the point. Here He is, affirming that He is the ‘Amen’. In all of these twelve or more different connections He speaks of Himself in this way. He is the ‘Amen’.

THE TWOFOLD WORK OF THE AMEN

But then, His work also was the work of the ‘Amen’. To this there were two aspects, namely, death and resurrection. In order to see something of the significance of His death, let us go back to the Book of Deuteronomy xxvii. There you find all the curses that would come upon the people if they were disobedient to the Lord, and turned away from Him to serve other gods, a whole long list of the curses that would come. We note two things: that the Levites, as representing the people, are required to affirm the curses, and then at the end, “all the people shall say, Amen”. By this they meant, ‘Yes, if we do turn away, if we are unfaithful, if we reject the Lord, let it be like that, let all the curses come upon us’. *They had to accept it.*

Dear friends, in the death of the Lord Jesus, there was the mighty, inclusive Amen to all the curses. Terrible thought! He was made a curse for us. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

tree" (Gal. iii. 13). As He hung there, viewing man's sin, departure from God, unfaithfulness and infidelity, and all that man had done against God, He entered into the consequences of the curse. He took the curse for it all upon Himself, and said, 'Amen, it is quite right, it must be'. He gave His Amen to the curse! But it was final! He swallowed up all the curse in His death, with a mighty affirmation, 'God is right—His judgment is just—Amen!'

But in His resurrection, we have the other side of His work as the 'Amen'. It is as the risen One that He appears to Laodicea, as you notice—"I am . . . the Living one . . . I am alive for evermore . . ." (Rev. i. 17, 18). Here we are on the resurrection side, and in the resurrection, as Paul tells us, we are justified by His life (Rom. iv. 25). Here is the Amen of justification! In His death, as we have seen, is the affirmation that God is right. You see, we never get through until we have come to the place where we say: 'In that judgment of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, God was right, where I am concerned. I was there, and God was right'. Until we come right down there, and say, 'Yes, Amen, God was right in judging me as a sinner, as an unfaithful one, God was right', we never get through to the other side. When we have got there, to that terrible Amen of judgment and death, by faith, we come to the place where we can stand on the other side of the Amen, the Amen of justification by His life. Yes, the mighty affirmation of God is that we are justified by His life! We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. You see then, that God has committed Himself. God has put His stamp and His seal upon that Amen! Just as truly as you are condemned to judgment in His death, so truly are you raised to justification in His life, for, "Jesus our Lord . . . was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justi-

fication" (Rom. iv. 25). Amen! God says: Amen! He is committed to that.

FAITH IN THE GOD OF THE AMEN

Now we must close. Is not this word needed in our day? Was there ever a time of greater uncertainty, perhaps even amongst many of the Lord's people? On every hand there are questions and doubts, weakening, loosening and disintegrating lives, with discouragement, disillusionment and disappointment all weakening the heart and loosening the springs of confidence and faith. There is so much to-day to cause a great question-mark to stand over everything. Are you feeling like that? We are all tempted to ask big questions about the biggest things, are we not? As we look within and without, our hearts could very often lose their confident assurance.

In a day such as this, it is well for us to come back and hear Him say concerning the purpose to which He has committed Himself, 'I am the Amen'. He has committed Himself to it as the 'Amen', the unchangeable, the unalterable One, with whom there is no variableness. He is holding to it through everything. Amen is written over His purpose. God is the God Amen. Christ is on the throne, and His Name is the 'Amen'; His rule is the rule of the 'Amen'; He has the last word in everything.

We must also see that it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking the words of the 'Amen'—"These things saith the Amen . . . He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit* saith . . ." The Spirit is the power for realising the purpose and effecting the rule. The Three Persons of the Trinity are one God; they share this Name, this title, this description, the 'Amen', the 'Amen'. The Lord strengthen our faith in Himself.

T. A-S.

THE NEXT

SPECIAL GATHERINGS

at HONOR OAK

will be held, the Lord willing, on

SATURDAY, June 8, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, June 9, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MONDAY, June 10, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MAY — JUNE, 1957.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during February and March 1957.

Aberdare £2 7s. 6d. ; Atco, N.J. £2 16s. 4d. ; Bath 10s. ; Bearsden 5s. ; Belfast 10s., 10s., £1 ; Bexhill-on-Sea 10s. 6d. ; Bexleyheath 5s. 6d. ; Birkenhead £1 ; Blackpool 6s. ; Boscombe £1 ; Bradford £1 0s. 6d. ; Brighton 16s. 2d., £1 ; Buckingham 10s. ; Canterbury 5s. ; Cato Ridge, S.A. 2s. ; Clyne 7s. ; Copenhagen, Denmark £2 ; Dublin £2, £1 7s. 6d., £1 ; Economy Point, Canada 7s. 4d. ; Falmouth 13s. 4d. ; Foxhole £5 ; Framfield 9s. 3d. ; Frinton-on-Sea £1 ; Germiston, S.A. 10s. ; Glasgow 7s. 2d., 5s., £1 ; Grimsby 10s. ; Hagerstown, Maryland £1 10s. ; Hereford 5s., 3s. 6d. ; Hove 10s. ; Hull 5s. ; Iver Heath 5s. ; Kenley 10s. ; Kennewick, Wash., £1 1s. 2d. ; Killearn £2 ; Lausanne, Switzerland £2 ; Leatherhead 10s. ; Leicester 3s., 10s. ; Lentrans 5s. ; London E.11—10s. ; S.E.13—10s. ; S.E.18—10s. ; S.E.19—5s. ; S.E.20—3s. ; S.E.22—10s. ; S.E.23—£2 12s., £2, £1 5s., 14s., £1, £1, £1, £1, £1 ; S.W.4—£2 ; S.W.13—£2 2s. W.1—£1 ; W.12—5s. ; Mackay, Australia £1 Maidstone £1 ; Manchester 5s. ; Manila, Philippines £2 18s. ; Marcus Hook, Pa. £1 15s. 3d. ; Neuchâtel, Switzerland 11s. ; Newport Pagnell 10s. ; Orpington 10s. ; Pietermaritzburg, S.A. 16s. 7d. Pontypridd 5s. ; Pretoria, S.A. 10s. ; Reconvilier, Switzerland £2 ;

Regina, Canada 18s. 5d. ; Ridgewood, N.J. 14s. 1d. ; Romford £2 ; St. Albans, N.Y. £3 10s. 5d. ; St. Austell 3s. ; Sandown 1s. 4d. ; Shoreham-on-Sea £1 ; Southsea 5s. ; South Shields 15s., 5s. ; Stillorgan £1 ; Sunbury-on-Thames 10s., 10s. ; Sutton Coldfield 15s. ; Taylors Hill £1 ; Timperley 10s. ; Toronto, Canada £3 14s. 4d. ; Umkomaas, S.A. £2 ; Watford 10s. ; Welwyn Garden City 5s. ; Worthing £1 ; Yetholm 5s. ; Zeist, Holland £2 ; Zetten, Holland 15s. 9d. ;

Total £97 2s. 11d.

Batu, Indonesia \$4.30 ; Birmingham, Ala. \$3 ; Boston, Mass. \$5 ; Cocoa, Fla. \$15 ; Chester, Pa. \$2 ; College Park, Md. \$2 ; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$3 ; Detroit, Mich. \$9.80 ; East Orange, N.J. \$1 ; Elmer, N.J. \$2 ; Granite City, Ill. \$10 ; Hampton, Va. \$3 ; Jamaica, N.Y. \$10, \$5 ; Los Angeles \$10, \$3 ; Minneapolis, Minn. \$10, \$2 ; Mt. Clemens, Mich. \$3 ; New York, N.Y. \$15, \$5, \$2 ; North Windham, Maine \$5 ; Palm Springs, Calif. \$30 ; Sharon Hill, Pa. \$7 ; Southgate, Ky. \$5 ; South Pasadena, Calif. \$5 ; Taipei, Formosa \$5 ; Tuscon, Ariz. \$5

Total \$187.10

Edmonton, Alberta C.\$5 Granite City, Ill. C.\$2
 Total C.\$7.00
 Palmerston, New Zealand N.Z.£1 0s. 0d.

IN view of the rapidly increasing demand for the magazine and the high cost of present day production, it is essential that the mailing list should be kept within the limits of vital and spiritual usefulness.

If friends no longer desire to receive it, we shall be glad if they will send a card to this effect to the Editor, 13 Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23.

By T.A.S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS	7/- (\$1.50)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY	5/6 (\$1.18)
WHAT IS MAN?	5/- (\$1.07)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY	4/- (\$0.85)
THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY	
Vol. 1 All Things in Christ	3/6 (\$0.75)
Vol. 2 The Mystery	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL I)	2/6 (\$0.53)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION	2/6 (\$0.53)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE	2/6 (\$0.53)
IN TOUCH WITH THE THRONE	2/- (\$0.43)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS	1/- (\$0.21)
GOD HATH SPOKEN	1/- (\$0.21)
IN CHRIST	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION	3d (\$0.05)
VISION AND VOCATION	2d (\$0.04)
SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
UNION WITH CHRIST IN CONSECRATION	2d (\$0.04)
THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXEMPLARY	
CHRISTIAN LIFE	2d (\$0.04)
THE MEASURE OF CHRIST	2d (\$0.04)
THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD	2d (\$0.04)
THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE	
LORD JESUS	2d (\$0.04)
THE SERVICE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
ON KNOWING THE LORD	2d (\$0.04)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN	2d (\$0.04)
ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE	2d (\$0.04)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
(<i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i>)	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF	1d (\$0.02)
WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?	3d (\$0.05)
	2/6 a dozen (\$0.53)

By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
(<i>For the Children. 110 pages. Illustrated</i>)	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
(<i>For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated</i>)	5/- (\$1.07)

By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
STANDING WITH THEM	1d (\$0.02)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY	2d (\$0.04)
READY FOR THE KING	
(<i>For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated</i>)	1/6d (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH	
(<i>For the Children. 52 pages. Illustrated</i>)	2/- (\$0.43)

By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE (<i>The Way of Salvation</i>)	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST	9d (\$0.16)

By W.N.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE	3d (\$0.05)
WASTE!	2d (\$0.04)

By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF	2d (\$0.04)
THIS MINISTRY	
(<i>Series of Messages given at Honor Oak</i>)	
Volume II.	9d (\$0.16)
Volume III.	1/- (\$0.21)

POSTAGE AND PACKING. For postage and packing please add the following to the total amount of the books ordered :

	In the United Kingdom.	Elsewhere (except U.S.A. & Canada)
10 copies of booklets price 4d and under	2d	1½d
5 copies of booklets price 6d to 9d	4d	2d
Single copies of booklets price 1/- to 1/6	6d	3d
<i>Otherwise:—</i>		
Orders totalling less than 5/- please add	4d in the shilling	2d in the shilling
Orders totalling between 5/- and £2 please add	2d in the shilling	1d in the shilling
Orders totalling more than £2 please add	2/- in the £	1/- in the £

In U.S.A. and Canada.

Single copies of booklets price \$0.30 and under please add 2 cents. Otherwise please add 4 cents in the dollar.

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to THE EDITOR, A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY, 13, HONOR OAK ROAD, FOREST HILL, LONDON, S.E.23.

Literature may be obtained from:—In U.S.A.—Mr. H. E. Almquist, Christian Literature Stores, 809, Fourth Ave. South, Minneapolis 4, Minnesota or Olivet House, 1505 South Westmoreland Ave., Los Angeles 6, California.—In India—Dr. A. I. Kinnear and Mr. A. J. Flack 6, Brunton Road, Bangalore, or from Evangelical Literature Service (Mr. Donald J. David), 1/24, Vepey High Road, Madras.

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

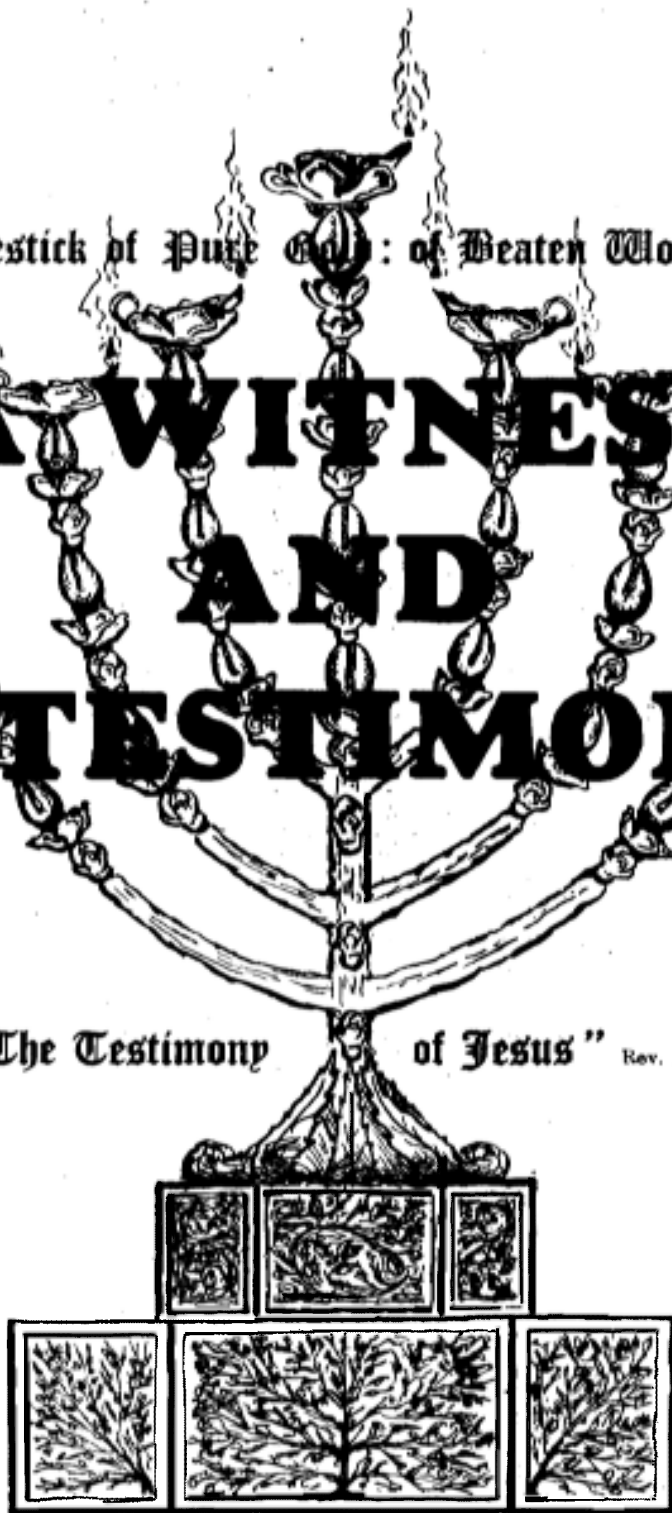
The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone: FOREST Hill 4609.

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

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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



Vol. 35. No. 4.

July, 1957.

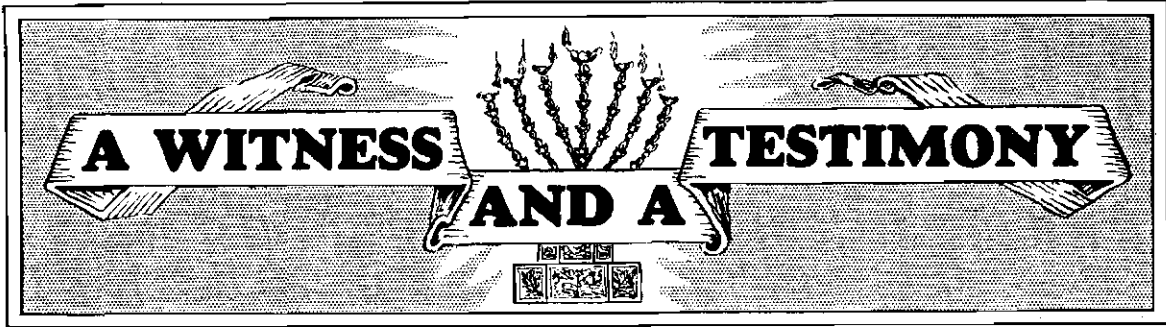
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

Vol. 35, No. 4.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	...	...	...	73	REIGNING WITH CHRIST	...	...	...	81
FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY (VII)	...	...	...	77	THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	...	...	...	85
THE ISRAEL OF GOD (IV)	...	...	...	89	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	...	...	...	88

EDITORIAL

DURING a recent visit to the Far East I was told by a responsible servant of God of the influence and value of a little book which was our first publication, and has long been out of print. Strangely also the question has recently come up from other directions as to whether this booklet could be reproduced. On reading it through again, while there are some things which we would not publish in exactly the same words to-day, there seems to be much that is very up-to-date and may very well have a message for this time—more than thirty years after its first issue.

I therefore propose to give the substance of some of the chapters in a short series of Editorials, or Leaders.

The title of the book was—

THE RELEASE OF THE LORD.

Here then is the first part.

Isaiah lxi. 1 - 3 (Lev. xxv. 10); Luke xii. 49, 50; iv. 18, 19; Acts ii. 1.

THE book which is known to us as “The Acts of the Apostles”, and sometimes “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”, might truly be named—

THE RELEASE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke introduces it with the observation that he had earlier written the beginnings of the acts and teaching of Jesus; implying that continuation is now his object and purpose. But what a change! The former activities were bounded and limited by time and space, and, at best, covered but a few square miles of Syrian soil. For the most part Omnipresence was in chains, except for a few breakings through of power at a distance. The activities and teaching were almost entirely limited to a people of one nation and tongue. *Then*, by outward urge, persuasion, and encouragement, He caused His wishes to be carried out; and to the dull minds of the spiritually unquickened He gave His spiritual treasures; explanations and reasons being necessary to confidence. *Then*, the necessity was laid upon Him of a very slow disillusionment and unfolding as to what form the end of the phase would take, because of the controlling personal interests, even in the inner circle. Pride, ambition, doubt, malice, self-assertiveness, self-confidence, self-realisation, self-defence, like barbed wires, circled around and wounded Him whenever He sought to move forward. Ever conscious from the beginning that world-dominion

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

was His as "heir of all things", yet He had not a place to lay His head, and to be "crucified through weakness" was to be His portion.

What a change! Now He has shaken off all His chains. Time and space no longer have any power over Him. Geography, the material things, Satan, demons, men, nations, thrones, all have been fully stripped off by Him. Now, by an inward dynamic, in spite of every threat and peril, men and women are moving out in every direction with a passion for the glory of His Name. Now, not as an historic figure, known "after the flesh", but, by an inward revelation of transcendent magnitude, He is known after the Spirit. Now, the once dreaded, unacceptable, offending Cross is all their glory. Now, suffering reproach has supplanted pride; selfless, disinterested sacrifice takes the place of ambition; a mighty energizing faith—not their own—has destroyed doubt; they lay down their own lives gladly and suffer the loss of all things for that Name.

In one strategic stroke He begins with a multitude representing "every nation under heaven". See how this fire spreads without artificial and forced agencies.

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

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

A SAD COMPARISON

There are some significant omissions from this record of conquests. We never read of the organizing of a missionary campaign.

Such things as deputations, lectures and lectures, exhibitions, appeals, advertisements, and so on, with all their cost and expenditure of time, money, energy, all to *try to get Christians interested in the souls of the unsaved*, are never hinted at. Any reporting of what God had done in the regions beyond was never by way of propaganda or advocacy. Statistics as mental stimulants; pathetic, tragic, sensational stories as emotional stimulants; urge and drive as volitional stimulants had no place here, so far as we can discern. The thing was *firstly* of the spirit, not of the soul. The

endeavour to reverse this order is undoubtedly the reason for a tremendous amount of the weakness and breakdown of to-day.

Speaking generally, this whole matter of the world-mission of the Church is on pre-resurrection ground to-day. The Lord is not straitened in Himself, but He is straitened in His people.

On the one hand, there is a need of workers, for almost half the human race is without the knowledge of Christ; and on the other hand workers are often ready to go forth, yet there are no means to send them. A third condition, almost more tragic, abounds, that of the spiritual breakdown of many who do go, so that 'converts' are not really and genuinely born from above with the Spirit of sonship becoming truly resident within. Demon powers persist in dominion and challenge. A policy of slow absorption of 'Christianity', through education, familiarization, and so on, as a compromise between failure to work upon the basis of genuine regeneration and an honest acknowledgment of the same with its practical implications, has been adopted. Finally there are the many who return home with lost assurance.

Surely all this stands in direct contrast to the spirit and experience of the New Testament. It is not difficult to go on at great length making distinctions between the two standards, that of the New Testament and that which has largely been since, but the more important thing is to display the secrets of that former glory.

We are convinced that He who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever", desires to have, and can have, His work on the same plane to the end of the age, and that in some parts of the world it is happening in a way very similar to the early days.

Here then begins an enquiry into the nature of the work of the risen Lord in "the Church, which is his body".

We ask, first of all, is there any phrase which embodies the conception, the motive, and the dynamic of this spontaneous world-conquest at its beginning?

We think that there is such a phrase, and it is this:

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.

This accounts for everything when possessing as it possessed them. Let us look it up.

"Who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. i. 2).

"I was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i. 9).

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

"I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the *testimony* which they held" (Rev. vi. 9).

"And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the *testimony of Jesus*" (Rev. xii. 17).

"I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the *testimony of Jesus*" (Rev. xix. 10).

"And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the *testimony of Jesus*" (Rev. xx. 4).

"Even as the *testimony of Christ* was confirmed in you" (I Cor. i. 6).

"They will not receive of thee *testimony concerning me*." (Acts xxii. 18).

"Our *testimony* unto you was believed" (II Thess. i. 10).

"Be not ashamed therefore of the *testimony of our Lord*" (II Tim. i. 8).

"Ye shall be my *witnesses*" (Acts i. 8) (same root in Greek as 'testimony').

"Must one be ordained to be a *witness* with us" (Acts i. 22).

"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all *witnesses*" (Acts ii. 32).

"Raised from the dead; whereof we are *witnesses*" (Acts iii. 15).

"Not to all the people, but unto *witnesses*" (Acts x. 41).

"With great power gave the apostles their *witness* of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts iv. 33).

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the *word of their testimony*" (Rev. xii. 11).

The New Testament, read in the light of these passages, shows very clearly that the remarkable story which it recounts is that of a testimony. It remains for us to ask what this testimony was. To clear the way for the positive answer we must say something as to what this "testimony" was *not*.

I. "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" WAS NOT A TEACHING

There is nothing in the whole story upon which to rest an argument or affirmation that the Apostles went out to the world with 'The Teaching of Jesus'. They were not propagating new doctrines or a system of truth. The teaching resulted from the acceptance of the testimony, the

expounding of its content followed that acceptance and was kept for believers only. It was a result, not a cause. The most they ever did was to substantiate their testimony from the Scriptures, and affirm certain facts concerning the Person of Christ.

II. "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" WAS NOT A NEW RELIGION

'Christianity' was not set over against or alongside of other religions and made 'comparative'. It was some time before some of the Apostles themselves realised the implications of their testimony in the matter of their being emancipated from Judaism. Great as the change was, they did not at first realise that they had been taken out of their 'religion'. Later they found that they were out and committed in spite of their own prejudices, and had to do their thinking and discussing after the thing had become a fact in embarrassing experience. See Peter in the house of Cornelius, and the events of Acts x, xi, xv, etc.

III. "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS" WAS NOT A NEW 'MOVEMENT'

No plans were laid. There was no policy. Organization was entirely absent, and any which subsequently had to be admitted was forced upon them by the embarrassment of the very vitality of things, and then it was of the simplest.

A thought-out campaign did not exist. To set up, launch, form, bring into being, or found a new society, sect, 'church', community, was not in mind. They did not set out for such, and although their testimony gave distinctiveness to all who believed; although outsiders labelled them and misinterpreted their motive and purpose; the distinguishing feature was life.

What then was "The Testimony of Jesus"?

All-inclusively it was the proclamation and affirmation of a fact. That fact was—and is—

The Universal Sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, established and vindicated by the resurrection from the dead.

This testimony has two sides. The objective and historic fact, of which they had had many infallible proofs, had become demonstrated in the power of that resurrection by the Holy Spirit in "the church, which is his body"—in all its members, in all its activities. That life, which in Him had conquered sin, death, hell, Satan, and had carried

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Him from "the lowest part" to the "far above all heavens", had been implanted in them by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

The "testimony of Jesus", then, is that Jesus lives universally triumphant, and the Church is the "pillar" (or monument) of that truth. It is His resurrection Body, possessed of His risen life and administered by the Holy Ghost, as the repository of that life.

The testimony of Jesus is in effect a life—His life. Not a mode of life, but a vital, infinite force; indestructible, irresistible, incorruptible; a vital force mediated to the spiritually dead wherever there is a readiness and willingness to believe on the Lord Jesus.

It burst the old moulds, "wine-skins" of tradition, worn-out systems, man-made orders and forms.

It sets aside even those things which were once raised up and greatly used by God, but which have ceased to be living, and are only past history. Even Judaism ceases to count here. The testimony of Jesus liberates captives, and a word spoken by its power is as an irresistible challenge to "let my people go". Lazarus must come forth when He, "the resurrection, and the life", commands through His Church. This life, issuing forth from the risen Lord as within 'the Body' by the Eternal Spirit, is the compelling power of the world-mission and testimony of Jesus.

There is no precedent in the New Testament for appealing for workers or missionaries. This is at best but a sorry alternative or necessity. When the Holy Spirit is really in possession and the life is manifested, then He takes the initiative in all work and workers, saying "Separate me . . . for the work whereunto I have called them".

Great emphasis is laid in the New Testament up-

on receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the universally Sovereign Lord—"the heir of all things". His mission is world-wide, cosmic. World-vision, world-passion, world-vocation, are the inevitable, immediate result of the establishment of His Lordship within. It cannot be otherwise. Then what is the matter that this thing is not spontaneous with so many? Why do not the Lord's people spread the Testimony by simply talking out of a full heart? Is this also the indictment of Acts xix. 2-5?

Is the cost a deterrent by which the Spirit is quenched? It will cost. To no place did the New Testament witnesses go with the "Testimony" but what the enemy—the dragon—made war. It was up to him to do so, for he stood to be a very great loser. It was the battle for dominion. This was his unwilling compliment, his unintentional congratulation. They represented something and possessed something which made hell angry and afraid.

The Lord's purpose and method in this age is to bring into resurrection-union with Himself two or three in every place and to 'add unto them such as are being saved.'

It is an accretion of life, not enticement, 'attraction', advertisement. Here again the Holy Spirit takes the initiative when a true testimony is borne.

The greatest need of the hour is a revitalising of the Lord's people with His risen life by the Holy Spirit. May we soon see this, and come to the place where everything—tradition, system, common acceptances, forms and moulds, prejudices, personal interests, reputation, prestige, compromise, the opinions of others, policy, and so on—will be sacrificed, if needs be, for LIFE, and the true and living TESTIMONY OF JESUS. So shall He find His release again and scatter the fire anew.

THE EDITOR.

THE true life, that which triumphs over sin and 'does not cease from yielding fruit', is a life that springs up out of death.

There is a deep spiritual meaning in those words of the apostle, which we fail to grasp at first sight, "Always bearing about in the body the dying"—or the putting to death—"of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. iv. 10, *nekrosin*).

Death is here put before us as the condition of life. The continual manifestation of the life depends upon the constant conformity to the death.

Death means separation, and life means union. By being brought more and more into sympathy with Christ's death unto sin, we become more and more thoroughly separated from its service and defilement. It is not merely separation from sinning, it is a separation from the old self-life. The great hindrance to the manifestation of the Christ-life is the presence and activity of the self-life. This needs to be terminated and set aside. Nothing but 'the putting to death of the Lord Jesus Christ' can accomplish this. Conformity to His death means a separation in heart and mind from the old source of activity and the motives and aims of the old life.

SELECTED.

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

FAITH UNTO ENLARGEMENT THROUGH ADVERSITY

VII. THE SHINING OF THE LIGHT

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isaiah lx. 1).

WE have said a good deal about the ground and nature of this light. We now go on to ask, and briefly to answer, the question: What is this light which is come, and the glory which is risen? And I have no hesitation in saying that, inclusively, it is that which has come peculiarly and particularly through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul. I know, of course, that much light has come through others; but the full light, concerning and for the Church, the spiritual Israel, has come through Paul, and it is mainly stored up in the full and concentrated ministry of his last letters. The final letters of Paul, that is, his Church letters, are undoubtedly the light which has come, and the glory which has risen.

LIGHT AND GLORY

Those two words—light and glory—are characteristic of those final letters. Not only are the words themselves there, but the truth is there. What light! You find no such light anywhere else in the Bible. Indeed, you are amazed at what this man came to see. Light shining right back into eternity past, light shining right on into eternity to be, light shining right down on to this dispensation. And as for the glory, again, it is a characteristic word—but it is also a characteristic feature, is it not? "Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus" (Eph. iii. 21). What glory has arisen through that ministry! But let me safeguard this by saying: this is not all the light that has come, nor all the glory; but in its fulness, its meridian, it has come through this channel.

THE CHURCH THE VESSEL OF RESURRECTION

First of all, it is light and glory concerning the Church's calling to be the resurrection vessel of the Lord. That is an early statement of the Ephesian letter. You will remember that Paul is here dealing with the Church. In other letters he deals with the individual, and refers to the individual's union with Christ in death and resurrection. That is the peculiar message to the Corinthians, for instance, where he says much concerning personal conduct

and personal character. But when you come here to these last great letters, especially Ephesians and Colossians, the idea of Paul is all the time collective; and when he refers to our being quickened together and raised together, he is thinking of the Church—the quickened and raised Church. As such it is the vessel of the resurrection—the vessel of the resurrection power of Christ.

Now, of course, there can be no Church without individuals, and therefore these things have their personal application. The Apostle says that this light which has come, which has risen upon us, this glory which has appeared concerning the Church is in order that we might "know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power . . . according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph. i. 18–20). That is for the Church, which includes all individuals. But *the Church itself* is a resurrection vessel, to be the embodiment of the exceeding greatness of His power. No one of us individually, nor any number of us just as detached and unrelated individuals, can know the exceeding greatness of His power, any more than we can know any other aspect of His fulness. It is thus easier to realise how the Church—the great company of the elect, in its pilgrimage and its warfare, right through all the ages, with all that it has had to encounter, and all that is still set against it—requires the *exceeding greatness* of His power to lift it up and out and clear, as an emancipated, established, heavenly people.

Is it not a very wonderful thing to realise that, wherever you and I may be as a part of that whole, we are by this illumination told that we are of the vessel of the resurrection—that is, of the exceeding greatness of His power? I do not know how much that comforts you, but if you had seen, as I have, the terrible, heartbreaking state of Christians in certain parts of the world—the spiritual limitation and weakness, and all that is set to keep them so, and how little there is that can make it otherwise—you would have come, as I have come, very near to the point of despair over this matter.

May I say here that these meditations are coming directly out of my experience. This is no worked-up subject. I say again: if you really knew the state of Christians and of the Church in this world—the desperate situation, the need, the limitation and the lack of that which would bring them

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

into greater fulness—you might well despair. You might even raise the major questions: Does God really mean to have His Church in fulness? Are we not attempting something impossible? Have we not committed ourselves to something that cannot be? Is it not going to break us, shatter us? Is it, after all, a fact that this is what God wants?

The answer is: *The light has been given—it has come*—this IS what God wants! And, blessed be God, because He wants it, the power is there for it, and it is the power of resurrection. Perhaps we want too much all at once, perhaps we are impatient; but God is going to have it. The vision has been given of a Church at the end filled with glory. The light has come that that is how it is going to be—spiritual fulness at last. God is not going to be defeated, and the Church is the very vessel or sphere of the power of resurrection.

You and I well know that, in so far as we apprehend this truth by faith that we are a part of that, that we are on that ground and we stand there, we shall come into the good of this power of resurrection, and it will operate in us wherever we are. It is the light that has been given, the calling of the Church to be the vessel of resurrection life and power. Therefore: “Arise, shine; . . . thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

Now you may recall that that was what we said about this light in our last message: that here, in Isaiah lx, we have the other side of the captivity—the other side, so to speak, of the grave of Israel, when their grave of exile has been opened and they have been called out on resurrection ground. The word is: “Thy light has come”. So you see, this light is bound up with resurrection, and so Paul’s letter to the Ephesians begins with that. “You did he quicken . . . God raised us up with him” (Eph. ii. 1, 6); and “to us-ward” is the “exceeding greatness of his power”, as in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

THE CHURCH THE VESSEL OF LIGHT

The second thing in this Isaiah message, which finds its spiritual fulfilment in the ministry of Paul, is that the Church is called to be the vessel of light, the light for all, unto the nations. We have already seen what that light meant, how it worked out, how effective it is shown to be in this chapter: what tremendous impact it registered to the ends of the earth, and how the nations are pictured as flowing toward that light.

Now, it is perfectly clear from this ministry of Paul that that is the vocation of the Church—to be the vessel and the vehicle of this light, the light

which all need, Paul’s great prayer for the saints is for light—the eyes of their heart being enlightened, that they might know . . . And then there follows the gradual unfolding of that light. What a wonderful fulness it is! How many beams there are to that light in his prayer! What there is to be known by the Spirit of revelation opening the eyes of the heart! The Church—and that means you and me—is definitely called to be the vessel of light. The Lord’s intention is that, if people are wanting to see and wanting to know, He shall be able to transmit such knowledge through us. It will be found amongst the Lord’s people.

That, as we know, is not generally true. But this is the calling of the Church: that wherever people are really seeking to know the truth, know the Lord, to come into the light, the Lord should have a vessel where that light can be found. It is a challenge, as well as a statement of fact. It is something that we must quite definitely lay hold of by faith. You see, it is God’s intention: therefore it must be possible: therefore the Lord provides for what He wants. It is not necessary for any child of God, who is standing by faith in the good of the heavenly calling and vocation, not to be a vehicle of light to others. Indeed, it is a failure in our calling if we are not such—if others are not seeing the light through us. I am not now thinking in terms of our moving about with our Bibles, trying to give people light, but of our *being* the light. The Church is to *be* the light which is given, and we are to be all “light in the Lord” (Eph. v. 8).

Now, the enemy’s great work is to try to bring in darkness and shadows, by means of anything that he can do to eclipse the light that the Church is called to be. He has succeeded to a very large degree in doing that, and he is always at it. We know that as soon as there comes anything of difference, disagreement, division, lack of love, there is a shadow, there is darkness. But how blessed it is to realise that, given the conditions required, there can be light which radiates, as in this chapter, to the ends of the earth, and people will flow to it. The flowing is because there is something to which to flow, something that answers a need. May the Lord put us in the position where need is all the time being met, right out to the uttermost bounds.

THE CHURCH THE VESSEL OF WEALTH

The next thing in this chapter, as we pointed out, is wealth. How much is said here about wealth! There is so much wealth that the whole world seems to be enriched by it everywhere. This is no

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

mere fanciful imagination. This is something that the Lord has really provided for, because He has called to it—to have a people here on this earth, who, wherever they are, are the channels of the enrichment of others in all directions, a people through whom there shall go out spiritual riches.

Now you see how true that is in Paul's ministry. What riches have been disclosed to us through him! Here is a man who was himself overwhelmed with the wealth into which he had been brought. He would cry—"O the depth of the riches . . .!" (Rom. xi. 33). He would speak of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. ii. 8); and he has given us the light concerning a great deal of that wealth. Look again into his ministry with that thought in mind. What wealth there is! Ought we to be poor, ought we to be in a state of spiritual penury? Ought we to be living so that it is difficult to make ends meet? Ought that to be the state of the Church—as, sadly enough, is largely the case? Ought it to be so, in the light of all this wealth?

Look again at the unsearchable, inexhaustible wealth that has come to light through this man alone. If you are familiar with these vessels of light that are his letters, you will realise that you have been taken out of your depth. There is a phrase in this sixtieth chapter of Isaiah: "the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee" (v. 5). It is a phrase which intimates, as perhaps nothing else might intimate, how vast are the resources that God has uncovered. A year or two ago we read in the papers about the return of the fishing fleet on the East coast of our own country. So great, so immense, was the haul that a whole fleet of fishing boats had to wait for hours because there were no berths for them. The harbour staff just could not cope with them, and the fear was that the great hauls of fish would have to be thrown back into the sea. But that is only one little spot on this earth, after all, a mere microcosm of the whole. We cannot faintly imagine the content of the sea.

What, then, shall we say of the abundance of the spiritual sea? What inexpressible wealth! I have been trying to cope with it for upward of forty years, and I am conscious yet that I am well-nigh drowned in this sea. Every time you come to it in the Spirit, you realise that its ranges are beyond you. Can you cope with the wonderful light as to the counsels of God before this world was? Can you cope with all that is said about what is going to be in the ages of the ages? It is beyond us altogether. But out of that fulness you and I are called to be enriched for the sake of others. The Church is called into this wealth. How wealthy

we should be! If you do not understand this, ask the Lord to open your eyes to your inheritance in Christ. The Church is called to be the vessel of resurrection, the vessel of light which has come, the vessel of the wealth that has been disclosed.

THE CHURCH THE VESSEL OF GOVERNMENT

We find the matter of government clearly touched on both in Isaiah lx and in these letters of Paul. Here is the picture from Isaiah: "Kings (shall come) to the brightness of thy rising" (v. 3). In a word—You shall have power, authority, government. Here are the rulers, the people who are themselves supposed to be in the place of government, and they are all bowing at your feet, they are all going down before you. Surely that is superior authority. Is there anything about that in Paul's letters? Indeed there is. ". . . Made him to sit at his right hand . . . far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph. i. 20, 21). Yes, even over principalities and powers and world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness. And the Church is called to that position. ". . . Raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus" (ii. 6). We have much to learn yet about that place and power of governing, ruling, of spiritual ascendancy; but we are saying that what the light has shown to us is that that is the Church's place according to God's mind. That is our place—the place of spiritual government, ascendancy, power, in Christ.

If only we knew more about it in practice! But may we be moved to realise that this is not something to which we are to climb by struggling. We have been brought there by Christ. He has seated us together with Him in the heavenlies. He has raised us, set us far above all. That is our place by right. I think one thing that you and I need to learn—although we have to be very careful about this, for some people have got themselves into trouble on this matter, developing a special phraseology and so on—nevertheless, we have to learn how, in our prayer times together, whether we be two or three or larger companies, how really to stand in our place of authority and government. We are all the time beseeching and imploring and entreating, and striving and struggling and reaching out to get somewhere, and we rarely take the position that is ours in Christ to govern situations and spiritual forces. And yet we are called to that—to rulership in a spiritual way. That does not

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

call for loud voices and strident language. It is a spiritual position, but it is a definite, positive exercise, to be made by us together as the Church: the exercise of authority over other authorities that are at work in this universe.

THE LIGHT FOR ALL

You notice the universality of what is spoken of in this sixtieth chapter of Isaiah—how far-reaching it all is. “Thy sons shall come from far” (v. 4), “the wealth of the nations” (v. 5), and so on. It is very comprehensive and extensive. This ministry is universal; the value of this light is so far-reaching. And when you turn to Paul’s ministry, you find the same thing. This is not just something for a little few in some odd corners of the earth. This is something for all. May God deliver us from exclusiveness—from tying up anything that He has given us to ourselves, and to just little companies here and there. God make us know that He has planted us right in the midst of the nations, and that He has given enough for all His people. We need constantly to watch this matter, lest we should preserve things to certain people who like this sort of thing. This light has been given for all, and we must watch carefully against anything and everything that prevents us seeing that it is available for all. The Church’s light is universal: it is for everyone and everywhere.

And there is enough of it. We are not going to lose anything—certainly we are not going to run out of resources—if we enlarge ourselves to all the Lord’s people. The real way of our own enlargement is the enlargement of our hearts to the Lord’s people. Be careful, then, and watchful against all that which is ever the propensity of people who get light—to reserve it for certain narrow circles. Remember that it is not only for people who have seen it and responded to it. But many of the Lord’s people are in danger of interpreting things in this way. The effect of that is pernicious. It is destructive to the very thing for which the Church exists. The light is for all, as the love is for all. We must keep the open heart

and the open mind. It is amazing how many hungry and longing people there are just shut up where there is no light. We have got to be always watchful that the light is available for them all.

This is a very necessary warning note. The Lord does not make His sun to shine upon the good only: the light of the sun does good to very bad people, very evil people as well. The Lord does not say, ‘Only the good people are going to have the light, have the sun’. No, it is available for all. If the light has come, and the glory has arisen, then it is like the sun—for everyone. We get surprises, do we not? I am ashamed to say that I have had some startling surprises. One has met, say, some dear person with make-believe as thick as paint, and everything that would set you back, make you keep away: and yet upon making contact, beginning to speak, one has found a heart that is hungry and ready. That is not exaggeration, that is not fiction—that is true. Hungry hearts and ready hearts are hidden away behind things that would repel. We must keep the light available for all, and never be put off.

I have spoken of physical things, but there are other things that must not put us off—ecclesiastical things, religious things, denominational things—anything you like. Do not be put off; do not allow your light to be withheld from anybody because of these complexes toward what perhaps you think is not the Lord’s full thought. Keep open to all. You will be in the way of surprises, and you will find that there will be wonderful responses to the light, from very unexpected quarters, if only you make it available.

It is a large thing, this light. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord will be unto thee an everlasting light” (Is. lx. 19). That is something very much bigger than natural luminaries. How great is the Lord! If our sun is great to the illumination and the warming of the whole earth, how much more so the Lord! Do not keep His light to yourself, do not tie it up in compartments. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

T. A-S.

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

REIGNING WITH CHRIST

Reading : II Chronicles xxiii and xxiv.

" And they buried him in the city of David among the kings . . ." (xxiv. 16).

" And they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings" (xxiv. 25).

THE statement about Jehoiada's burial among the kings might pass unnoticed if he had been of the royal line. Its importance is found in that he did not even belong to the tribe of Judah. Here on earth he was no king. He was never anointed or crowned. His case seems to have been unique. He was the only commoner to be given a burial with David and his fellow kings. We are still more surprised when we come to consider what happened to the actual king of his time, Joash, for of him it is distinctly stated ". . . they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings". Obviously there is some important message to be found in this distinction. Why was Joash rejected, and why was Jehoiada so honoured? We need to know, since our own future is involved. It is part of our heritage by redemption to reign with Christ. Can Jehoiada's story help us to attain to this throne destiny? Perhaps it can. Will Joash's failure be a helpful warning to us? Surely the happening would never have been recorded if there were no lesson in it. But first of all, we need to consider what was involved in these Old Testament burials.

THE VERDICT OF ETERNITY

Most of us set very little store by where our bodies will be interred. In the Old Testament, though, there seems to have been great concern over the matter. It seems clear that such burials represented a placing in terms of eternal values. Take the case of Abraham and his descendants. With what detail is the purchase of the cave of Machpelah related, and the fact that first Abraham, then Isaac, and later Jacob, were buried there (Gen. xxiii; xxv. 10; xlix. 29 - 31). After waiting through the long years of the bondage of Israel in Egypt, journeying throughout the forty years in the wilderness, and then being brought over into the land, the bones of Joseph were at long last laid to rest in that same tomb (Joshua xxiv. 32), even as Joseph himself had so explicitly ordered. These

men all looked to the future, they "all died in faith" (Hebrews xi. 13), and by their burials laid claim to their joint inheritance of the Divine promises.

This idea of posterity's verdict is perhaps confirmed by Jeremiah's denunciation of the ungodly king Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. xxii. 19). From a merely human viewpoint this might represent vindictive bitterness persisting even after a man's death, an emotion altogether unworthy of a servant of God. If, however, we take burial as an indication of eternity's verdict on a life, then it is clearly seen that this is a judgment worthy of such a man. For him there could be no future, no dignity, no glory. In view of his stubborn defiance of the Lord this tragic rejection was inevitable.

But perhaps the most precious example of the spiritual meaning of burial is found in the case of Moses. "And he (i.e. the Lord) buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 6). There was an intimacy between Moses and his Lord which no other man enjoyed. It is true that one fault of his (tolerable enough in common men but inexcusable in him) kept him from entering the land, but eternity's verdict is made very plain by this most honoured of all burials. It was unique. God Himself wanted all to know that this man was His special friend.

It is in the light of these examples that we turn back to Jehoiada, whom they buried "among the kings". And it is also in their light that we pause first to consider the tragic case of Joash who failed to make his kingly calling and election sure.

NO PLACE IN THE THRONE

Joash's story is the more remarkable because in many ways he had been one of Judah's good kings. During his reign there had been a turning away from idolatry and a revival of worship of the Lord. Joash himself had taken a leading part in all this. Yet in spite of his experiences of the grace of God, and in spite of his many good works in the Lord's service, he had failed to persevere to the end. Like most of the other good kings of Judah, he had lost out spiritually, and finished under a cloud. A true parallel seems to be found in some

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

of the Christians described in the letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. ii and iii). There, too, men had known the power of Divine grace, had been valiant for the truth, and had worked hard and long for the Lord, yet in several churches the shadow of ultimate failure to qualify for the throne was hanging over them. The urgent call of Christ was, "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. iii. 11). We are called to the throne. The promises to the overcomers make this very clear. Joash was so called, and for a time gave fair promise, but in the end he was rejected. If we are to avoid his tragedy we must never rest on the past; we must never take our spiritual inheritance for granted; we must be faithful to the end.

If we come to enquire more closely into the cause of Joash's rejection, we find at least a hint that his weakness was due to the fact that his spiritual life was dependent on outside influences rather than on a personal walk with God. He was certainly privileged to have such influences. His early years were spent hidden in the House of God, where he was cared for by his aunt and her husband, Jehoiada. No harm reached him there, for Athaliah had no taste for the Temple. When he was first introduced to the people he was completely surrounded by faithful men, for Jehoiada the priest "set all the people, every man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about" (II Chron. xxiii. 10)—a token of the strong influences for good which were to cover and protect him. As he grew up and administered his kingdom there was always the faithful Jehoiada at his side, counselling him and encouraging him, so that "Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (xxiv. 2). When Jehoiada died, however, he succumbed to the bad influences of the princes of Judah (xxiv. 17). It seems, therefore, that, whether for good or evil, his life was largely governed by outside influences. This is a perilous procedure. How grateful we should be for godly surroundings, how responsive to the helpfulness of Christian fellowship; but it is nevertheless of vital importance that we should know God for ourselves. We must learn to practise fellowship, but to see that it helps us to a closer personal walk with God, and does not become a substitute for such a walk. The Lord may take away our Jehoiada; the Devil may send us evil counsellors like those princes of Judah; then if we have leaned too much on outward influences we shall fail, as Joash did.

A PLACE OF HONOUR

Unlike Joash, Jehoiada had a noble end. "They buried him in the city of David among the kings". David was God's pattern king. Every succeeding monarch was judged by his standard and only approved in the measure in which he had been true to it. So Jehoiada's honour was not only a general one, among the kings, but particular in that he thus became identified with God's great king. The call to us is not just to reign, but to reign with Christ. Jehoiada's placing was not an empty office, a mere title, a superficial honour. It was heaven's verdict on his character; here was a man who could rightly be associated with David in his spiritual qualities of kingship. For us, too, the test is that of Christlikeness. We are called to overcome and to sit with Christ in His throne.

NO COMPROMISE WITH THE LORD'S ENEMIES

If we enquire about the reasons for Jehoiada's being so honoured we cannot but be impressed with his courageous fight for purity. Jehoiada was a warrior. He would have no compromise with the enemies of the Lord. In his day Athaliah embodied that hostility to the Lord. Jehoiada neither feared her nor came to terms with her; he withstood her even at peril of his life.

1. ATHALIAH'S ORIGIN

Athaliah was the only foreigner ever to occupy the throne of David. She was not true-born and really had no place in Israel; she was Baal's representative to bring in false worship; and she was herself the product of compromise. The most extraordinary thing about her was that her place in Judah was only made possible by foolish sentiment. It all began with the good king, Jehoshaphat. For some inexplicable reason this king was fascinated by Ahab, and on more than one occasion made alliances with him and his son. These experiences invariably brought him loss—compromise always does that in the end—but worse, they brought a usurper to the throne. Athaliah was Ahab's daughter and a true offspring of Jezebel, yet she was permitted to become the wife of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. Once given a place in Judah, she never rested until by intrigue and murder she held undisputed sway over the whole realm. Such are the fruits of foolish compromise. The evil which Elijah had fought in the Northern kingdom had captured the throne of Judah and

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

broken up the very House of God (II Chron. xxiv. 7).

2. ATHALIAH'S OBJECTIVE

No doubt when she was first betrothed to Jehoram, Athaliah seemed fair, and her presence in Jerusalem reasonable enough. Compromise so often seems fair and reasonable. But in due time her objective became very clear—"she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah" (II Chron. xxii. 10). This is Satan's objective all the time—to rob God of His royal seed, of those who are to rule for Him. Athaliah failed, for the baby Joash was hidden by his godly aunt. The purposes of God may seem to hang precariously on a slender thread, but they go on! Yet later Satan came back again, and this time he succeeded where Joash was concerned, for it was that same baby, now grown to be a man, who finally murdered Jehoiada's son and forfeited his eternal honour as king. So often the Devil's wiles succeed where his wrath has failed!

But the supreme example of the Satanic objective to destroy the "seed royal" was seen in Herod's case. A foreigner like Athaliah, like her he murdered all possible candidates for the throne, and like her he failed, for the Lord hid His Son in Egypt. So far as Herod was concerned, Satan was foiled. Later on, however, he came back again, this time with subtle wiles, and indeed he never ceased to tempt the Lord Jesus in an effort to prevent His coming to the throne. Thank God, Christ never failed. He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne. It is good, though, for us to take careful note of this supreme objective of the enemy. He cannot take away our eternal life, but he will never cease to try to keep us from having a place in the throne.

3. ATHALIAH'S OVERTHROW

It was in the matter of her overthrow that Jehoiada displayed his kingly qualities, and proved himself a worthy associate of David. He was a man of the sanctuary. How necessary that is! But when the moment came he was also a man of action. Meanwhile, he had to wait for that moment and to learn the lesson of patience. It was useless to meet flesh with flesh. He made no attempt to resist Athaliah in his own strength, for the time was not ripe. So for six years the priest had to wait for God's moment to arrive. Patience is part of the essence of faith and spirituality. No man is fit to have a place in the throne if he cannot be trusted to wait for God. Saul lost his throne over

this very issue. David, God's true king, was the man who could sincerely affirm, "I waited patiently for the Lord . . ." Jehoiada did not capitulate to Athaliah, as many others did. He was strong in spirit to resist her. Yet he knew how important it was not to be rushed into premature action but to wait God's hour.

We do well to note his positive attitude. He not only deplored the evil reign of Athaliah; he not only listened to and shared in the general complaints about the evils among God's people; that is all negative. Jehoiada was positive. He concentrated on God's alternative. The time came when he was able to gather together the faithful who were so grieved at the Baal worship, and then he "shewed them the king's son" (II Kings xi. 4). Here was not dead criticism but living hope. God has an alternative. Men must know that there is an answer, something positive and chosen of God, which will dispossess the usurper and hold the throne for the Lord. Some of them were doubtless astonished to find that there was such an alternative. It was a new idea to them. Others, perhaps, had heard rumours but had never seen for themselves. This Divine king was a "mystery", he had been hidden in the sanctuary, but Jehoiada made him manifest and made the whole basis of their uprising and covenant to be that they had seen in little Joash the God-given alternative to the present unhappy state of God's people. Christ is God's "mystery". The New Testament is God's unveiling of Him to men. What the Church needs is not those who will criticize or complain about things as they are, still less those who will accommodate themselves, but those who can produce God's alternative. What a need there is to-day for those who are spiritually like Jehoiada, the man who "shewed them the king's son"!

JEHOIADA'S DEVOTION TO THE HOUSE

It was part of Jehoiada's epitaph that he had done good toward the House of God. What memories of David! For David made it clear that the throne was not for him an end in itself. He could not rest till that throne had brought in the House of the Lord. We should realise that we are called to share Christ's throne, not in order to be prominent or to be ornamental, but because there is a great task to be undertaken. In David's case it was temporal and earthly; in ours it is spiritual and eternal. Jehoiada understood that the overthrow of Athaliah was not the full objective; it was only to make way for the great task of restoring the House. It seems that his fitness to hold a place

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

among the kings was largely due to this devotion to the House of the Lord.

1. HIS INITIATIVE

He was a great man for making covenants (II Chron. xxiii. 1, 3 and 16). He drew others in to the great enterprise. His influence among them was not limited to words and ideas—he believed in action. True, he learned that prayer must come first; his hidden years in the sanctuary were proof of that. True, also, as we have said, that he needed to learn that most difficult lesson of waiting for God's time. But prayer and patience must lead to committal and action. Jehoiada's value was that he was able to get others to act with him, to become the leader of a band of men who had sworn to put God's interests first.

There were two great events in his lifetime: the bringing in of the kingdom and the restoration of the House. We have seen how important was the part which he played in the coronation of Joash; now we find that it was really he who was instrumental in the great revival and recovery of true worship in Israel. The difficulty was to get the work really started. Everybody wanted the temple restored; the king gave the orders; the priests and Levites handled the gifts; and in a vague and desultory way the people supported the idea. But nothing was done. Indecision, muddle, suspicion, selfishness, all this and much more held up the work. It was then that Jehoiada acted once again. "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar . . ." (II Kings xii. 9). A simple enough action, yet it proved a decisive factor in getting the work done.

2. HIS ENERGY

Though a man of the sanctuary, Jehoiada was also a man of action and of energy. There seemed something symbolic in this 'money-box' chest. It stood for wholeheartedness. Once the money was in, it could not be withdrawn. The hole in the lid was for committal; once the coin was inserted, it stayed there until the chest was taken away and unlocked by those in charge. Jehoiada's whole life had been on this principle. He brought his offering to the Lord in a business-like way, he committed it without any questions or reservations, and he was glad for the Lord to have his all. Such gladness is infectious. The people who had hitherto been grudging and half-hearted now gave freely, and they enjoyed giving too. "And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and

cast into the chest, until they had made an end", and what is more they "gathered money in abundance" (II Chron. xxiv. 10, 11). How often are God's people waiting for a lead, an inspiring example to glad and sacrificial action! Jehoiada gave it to them, and as they followed him it became a time of joy and abundance for God.

Nevertheless we must notice his reverent spirit. It is easy to be so energetic as to grow careless or presumptuous. It is easy, when people and things are obviously faulty, to fail in respect or proper behaviour. Now in those early days the House of God was most imperfect, it came very far short of what it should have been, and indeed of what Jehoiada ultimately made it. Yet he was most careful to recognise the holiness of God's presence. Only the Levites were to enter the sanctuary (II Chron. xxiii. 6), Athaliah must be taken outside before she was slain (xxiii. 14), "And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the Lord, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in" (xxiii. 19). God's king will be scrupulously careful about practical holiness of life and relationship with others.

It is important, also, to notice how thoroughly he based his actions on the Word of God, going right back to Moses for his pattern (xxiii. 18; xxiv. 6, 9). We are not meant to become slavish legalists. God forbid! Neither David nor Christ were ever that. But we are called to absolute loyalty to the revealed will of God: ours is not to improvise or invent but to obey.

3. HIS STEADFASTNESS

"And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada" (II Chron. xxiv. 14). The supreme purpose of all the actions and reforms was to provide for the satisfaction of God, so that without fail He might receive the outpoured worship of grateful and loving hearts. Jehoiada kept this up right to the end of his days. Most of the others, from Solomon onwards, had failed in this point. It is a most common failing: We begin our Christian life and witness with the determination that it shall be all for God; we enter into ministries with the one purpose that everything shall be of Him and for Him; but alas! familiarity, time, adversity or prosperity are apt to bring dividedness and declension. The work goes on but the burnt offering ceases. With Jehoiada, God's pleasure was the paramount concern right to the end. This was surely why he was given his place "among the kings".

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

THRONE LIFE MUST BEGIN NOW

The truth of the matter is that if we are to have a place in the eternal throne we must learn throne life here and now. After all, Jehoiada's final placing was but the recognition of his proved character. He had learned to reign, even without being officially crowned.

The essence of ruling is to exercise an influence for good. Jehoiada answers fully to this test. In his home, in his work, in his nation, in every place he ruled for God. Why did his wife act so heroically in saving and cherishing her little nephew, Joash? Why was it that Joash himself was such a wise and godly king during the whole of Jehoiada's life? Why was it that, when Joash turned aside to idols, the man to stand for God, and to pay with his life

for so standing, was Jehoiada's son? Why was it that during that whole period the people were so united and blessed? The answer to all these questions is found in the godly influence of Jehoiada. No wonder he was given a place among the kings, for he was a king in nature, if not in name.

We are thus faced with a solemn challenge concerning the throne. What is to be eternity's verdict on us? We shall be saved, all right, of that there can be no doubt. We shall have our place "in the city of David", sharing in the glories of our reigning Christ. This, too, is certain. But shall we have a place among the kings? It seems that we are on trial now. It is now that we must learn to reign with Christ. Let Joash be our warning, and Jehoiada our inspiration to keep our "on-high calling" ever in view.

H. F.

THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT**THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

"He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 14, 15).

"But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . 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" (I Corinthians ii. 10, 14).

It is quite clear, I think, that the passage we have quoted from Corinthians represents the fulfilment of the words in John: that is, that what the Lord Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do, in declaring or revealing His things, the Holy Spirit really did do through the Apostles. What we have through the Apostles is really the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and showing them to us. I want at this time to take up one of these major things which came in with Christ, about which He Himself said a great deal and about which the Apostles said much, and about which their ministry as a whole is really concerned. I refer to what the Lord Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

As I have said, and as we know from the Gospels, the Lord Jesus said a very great deal about the Kingdom of God. And right at the end of the book of the Acts, near the end of the long, full life of the Apostle Paul, we are told that the last

things he was talking about were the things of the kingdom of God. He received in his hired house where he was a prisoner all who came to him, and spoke to them the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts xxviii. 30, 31). This, then, is a major matter in relation to the Lord Jesus about which we need the Holy Spirit's teaching and interpretation, for it is really this that sums up the whole mission and ministry of the Lord Jesus. Everything else may be said to be gathered into this: you have only to be reminded of the parables of the Kingdom to realise how very comprehensive this matter of the Kingdom is.

THE JEWISH IDEA OF THE KINGDOM

Now, in order to prepare our way for the real heart of this message, we must spend just a few minutes reminding ourselves of the Jewish background and expectation as to the Kingdom of God. To those to whom He spoke in His time on this earth, this about the Kingdom of God was no strange language. They had been looking and waiting for the coming of that Kingdom for many centuries. Their prophets had said much about it, and they were in expectation of the coming Messiah to set up this Kingdom of God. They believed that God was the Ruler of this universe, and they believed that Israel was the nation in which He would set up His Kingdom on earth, and they were waiting for Him to do it. At the very time of the coming of the Lord Jesus, we are told, they were

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

in expectation of this coming One. Their ideas of the Kingdom were entirely secular, entirely temporal, with all the personal, physical, earthly advantages to themselves that that would create.

We know that it did not happen in the way in which they expected. Christ came, the Messiah came, but in their form of expectation the Kingdom of God did not come, and they missed it. As they expected it, it was never instituted and set up: and so, because they missed it, a common phrase has come into existence about this Kingdom. It is said now to be 'the Kingdom in mystery'. I think what is meant by that phrase (which is not a Bible phrase, by the way) is that it is a suspended Kingdom, in its real nature; it is something abstract and something rather indefinite. The mentality about the Kingdom in this dispensation is like that—that it is an indefinite kind of thing, so that many people are still waiting for the Kingdom to come; and that gives us our point in this very meditation.

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM

We have already said that the whole ministry of the Apostles was the ministry of the Holy Spirit interpreting and showing the meaning of the Kingdom of God. Now, the whole New Testament rests upon a present definite fact: that the Kingdom *has come*. It is here—it is in existence. It may not be the temporal Kingdom that the Jews looked for; it may not be in secular terms: it is something even more real than that. The Kingdom is come, in very truth: but, in order to appreciate that, it is necessary for us in the first place to get a better understanding of the word 'kingdom'. The translation of the Greek word which the translators have given is not a very happy or fortunate one. When you speak of a 'kingdom', it at once conjures up ideas—such as that of a system and a realm; but the original word does not, at any rate in the first place, connote that at all.

The word behind our word 'kingdom' means 'sovereignty', 'rule', or 'reign': and so the Kingdom of God really means the reign of God, the rule of God, the sovereignty of God. It is a realm or a form of government—an economy, as we call it—in so far as it is the sphere where God's sovereignty is in operation, where God's rule is active. That, of course, is found in the synonym for the Kingdom of God, so often used—the 'Kingdom of heaven'. There is no essential difference between the two expressions. It just means, on the one hand, the personal rule of God, and on the other hand, the sphere where that rule, that sovereignty operates—namely, Heaven.

THE KINGDOM NOW COME

Now, in this particular and peculiar form, the Kingdom of God came in with the exaltation of Jesus Christ to God's right hand. You remember that the Lord Jesus said one day to His disciples: "There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1). Now, that is a very interesting statement: That is the way Mark puts it: "the kingdom of God come with power". You know that the 'miracles' of the Lord Jesus are really, according to the original language, the 'powers' of the Lord Jesus. Instead of speaking of them as miracles, we should speak of them as powers, or as 'mighty works'. As His parables were an expression of His wisdom, His miracles were an expression of His power. They were powers in certain specific forms; it is the same word, the same meaning. "Some . . . shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come"—if you like—as a miracle, as a mighty work, as a power, corresponding to His miracles in the days of His flesh.

But the supreme miracle, or the supreme power—what was that? The Apostle Paul, under the tuition and illumination of the Holy Spirit, makes that perfectly clear in one statement. "That ye may know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power . . . that working . . . 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. 18-21). The supreme 'power' was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, with a view to His exaltation, and the Kingdom came then. Paul says it has happened already, that Jesus, by this tremendous, this superlative, miracle of God, is at the Father's own right hand, "far above all rule, and authority", *now*. And into that you will be gathering other statements. "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor. xv. 25). "He must reign": that is not future—that is now. "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). It is something already done. The Kingdom has come; the Kingdom of God is in existence. Christian history can only be explained in terms of a Throne, and that Throne is the Throne of Christ.

It is tremendously impressive that when it has been in right relatedness to the exalted Christ as supreme Head and Lord, the Church has been un-

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

conquerable, unquenchable, impregnable. Through everything that men and hell could do to bring it to an end, as they did with its Lord, it has gone on its way. All the hammers have worn themselves out; the anvil remains intact. But when, as in the dark ages, the Church has been out of right relationship with Him as its Lord, as on the Throne, then the Church has suffered defeat and humiliation. There, then, is God's fact, and if only we are adjusted to God's fact, the world and the kingdom of darkness cannot overthrow us, do what it will. We shall march on, "terrible as an army with banners" (S. of Sol. vi. 4, 10).

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE CUSTODIAN OF THE KINGDOM

Now, this whole matter of the Kingdom is shown to have been put into the custodianship of the Holy Spirit. His relationship to this matter is made very clear. A comment by one of the Apostolic writers upon something that the Lord Jesus said when He was here was this: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). The Spirit is given when Jesus is glorified: which means that Jesus is now in glory, exalted to the right hand of God. The Spirit, then, came expressly to take up this whole matter of the Throne rights, the Kingdom interests, of the Lord Jesus. His whole work is bent upon bringing this sovereignty of Christ into expression, this rule of Christ into realisation, this government of Christ into the Church and through the Church. And, alongside that, it is the Spirit's ministry to instruct us, to teach us, to show us the meaning of the reign, the rule, the sovereignty, of Christ. That is a big ministry, and you and I must seek to interpret everything in the light of that.

The Spirit has come—He has come as committed to a particular task. He has come as the Custodian of a great and specific Divine purpose. If the Holy Spirit is doing anything at all in this world with men and women, with you and with me, and in us, let it be understood that His object, His aim and His end is to make Christ absolutely Lord in every detail—the supreme, sovereign King.

THE KINGDOM WORKING IN SECRET

It explains all that happens to us, and it explains all that is going on within us. Of course, this Kingdom—this reign, this rule, this sovereignty—is working very largely in secret. We have said that

it marks the change in the dispensation. As things are now, the Kingdom is something that is so largely hidden because it is now spiritual, and not temporal or secular. But oh, how wonderful is this secret working of the Spirit in relation to this rule! It forms a subject by itself, which we cannot pursue just now. But let it be understood that there is a deep, deep work going on from Heaven by the Spirit of God in this whole creation. Sometimes we speak of a person as being a 'deep' person. We pass the remark, 'Oh, he is a deep one'. What do we mean? There is something deep down there that is characteristic: you cannot always just put your finger on it, or define it and say what it is, but it is something very real that explains that person.

In a very much fuller sense, that is the character of the rule of Christ by the Spirit in this dispensation. There is something very deep going on. God's plans are very deeply laid. Sometimes you just get a hint of them, just see some little suggestion or token. God is deeper than all the wit and wisdom of men; God undercuts all the cunning of Satan—yes, He is deeper than the deep things of the very Devil himself. He has got it all measured, all weighed up, all in hand; and when the full story is told, it will be seen that Satan was not having his way at all, but underneath everything God was working.

THE KINGDOM AND PATIENCE

Now, in closing, just this word for practical help. John, who, as you know, is so much occupied with the spiritual aspect of things, in the opening of the book of the Revelation uses a phrase which I think is a clue to very much: "Your brother . . . in the . . . kingdom and patience which are in Jesus" (Rev. i. 9). The sovereignty and the patience are here put together, hand-in-hand. Sovereignty and patience—what does that mean?

Well, it may very well mean that God and Christ, in that absolute sovereignty, can afford to be very patient and to wait a long time. They have the thing in hand, and know how it is going to work out in the end. They can be very patient because of sovereignty.

It may also mean that patience is the way of sovereignty: that if you have the power in your hand, you are not going to use it for men's instant destruction—you are going to be patient. Men interpret God's patience and longsuffering and long delay as God's weakness or indifference, but His patience has to be interpreted in the light of His sovereignty in this way. He is not going to use His power to force issues instantly. He is going to

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

give us plenty of time—plenty of time. John was knowing something of that in his exile in Patmos. If He was on the Throne, why did not the Lord meet this Nero—meet this terrible, terrible persecution from Rome—meet the sufferings of His servant and servants with swift deliverance? Well, that is not God's way; He is not using His sovereignty in that way. He is giving men time, He is being infinitely patient, He is waiting. The sovereign rule and the patience go together.

But there is a third aspect to this. Why was John in Patmos? Was it because Rome and the emperor had sent him there into exile? Was it because of the persecution of the Christians at that time? Not at all! The Roman emperor and his minions were mere blind instruments under the Throne of Jesus Christ. What was the meaning of it?—and if we get this, we have got the meaning of so much adversity and suffering and difficulty. You see, *virtues are the real power*. Power is not official; power is not coming and bludgeoning people into submission and obedience. That is not power, that is not the Kingdom of God. The power of God's rule is the power of virtues, spiritual qualities; and there is a quality about Divine patience that is infinite power.

Where would you or I be to-day but for the infinite patience of God? Is it not that that has saved us, preserved us, kept us? Every day we have to worship God for His patience, to acknowledge that this patience of His is such a mighty thing. What we owe to it! Where should we be without it? John was a fellow-partaker in the patience of the sovereignty. John was really learn-

ing the power of the Kingdom of God and of Christ which was found in patience; for, after all, the triumphant person is the one who can wait patiently. We know that impetuosity spells weakness—weakness and impetuosity go together. The test of strength is: Can we wait—not being passive, but waiting positively—and go on waiting?

That kind of waiting represents a mighty faith. It is a faith that says: God *can* do and *will* do.

'The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small.
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.'

He spreads it over a long time, but it is all right. The issue is a very thorough work.

Now, the bringing together here of the Kingdom—the sovereign rule—and patience, means this: that you and I are being trained for rule, for government, along the line of necessitated patience. The impulsive, the impetuous person will never reign, will never be put into responsibility of spiritual government. The work of the Spirit in relation to the Kingdom—the rule—is to bring about patience, Divine patience, in our hearts. I venture to say that this is perhaps one of the things that we all need more than anything else. You may be a very patient person—some of us know very well that we are not—but the Lord takes great pains with us over this, because He sees that patience is not only a virtue, but a power (the words 'virtue' and 'virile' are cognates). Patience is both virtuous and efficacious: it is the rule of the Spirit in our hearts.

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

HIDDEN TREASURE

COLOMBIA, being one of those countries bounded by the Spanish Main, is a land where people sometimes still think and talk of buried treasure. They even have a name for it, *Guaca*, a name which conjures up visions of rich Indian burial places, and makes men dream of suddenly becoming rich by unearthing gold treasures which have been hidden for centuries.

Some years ago there was a Colombian who really had such a dream, and so vivid were the details that, when he woke up, he invited several of his friends to join him in a search for the place which he had seemed to visit in his sleep. He was so sure, and so persuasive, that in the end they agreed to go with him. They left their homes and

their work, setting off into the forest, far from all other human beings, to look everywhere for the spot where they hoped to find the *Guaca*.

They searched for many days, going deeper and deeper into the jungle, but they never found the buried gold. And yet, in a sense, they did, for by the time the story was finished, they had found a rich reward in a most unexpected way.

It happened like this. One day they heard sounds of movement among the trees, and, as they peered warily into the gloom, they suddenly caught sight of a mysterious figure shuffling along in the forest. He was dirty and ragged, leaning heavily on a stick, and as they drew near they could see that his face was ghostly pale. They hurried forward to

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

meet him, and as they did so, the stick dropped from his trembling hand, in a choking whisper he uttered just one word, and then he collapsed and fell unconscious into their arms.

They carried him to their camp, laid him down to rest and tried to revive him with their rough food. For some days it did not seem that he could live, but he did, and slowly gained a little strength. As soon as they could move him, they set to work to get him slowly out of the forest and back to their little up-country town. By this time, of course, they had given up all thoughts of the buried treasure which they had dreamed about. Here was a man in danger, a man in need; so they felt bound to do all they could to save him.

The one word which the fainting man had spoken to them was 'Aeroplane', so they guessed that he must have escaped from a crash somewhere; but they little realised what a stir their return home was to make, not in that hamlet only but in the whole of Colombia. The news was so wonderful that people could hardly believe it. Almost a month had passed since a small hydroplane, on its way from the coast to the city of Medellín, had mysteriously disappeared without leaving a trace. The mists over the region had made it impossible to discover what had happened from the air, and the country was too rough and mountainous for a thorough search by land. All hope of survivors had long been given up. Mr. Marshall's widow (as she now thought herself to be) was just about to return to her home in the United States.

Mr. Johnson, who was also an American, had met Mr. Marshall and had witnessed to him of the Lord Jesus, so naturally enough he had prayed that his life might be saved. Now, after such a long time, it all seemed so hopeless that he hardly knew whether to go on praying any more. Yet he felt that he must not stop praying. And now he knew why. For this stumbling, dying figure in the forest was none other than Mr. Marshall himself, brought back alive by what seemed very much

like a miracle. Once again God had answered prayer. It appeared that the hydroplane had crashed on a mountainside. The rest of the passengers had either been killed or died of their injuries. The German crew had not been hurt, but they had gone to seek for help and had lost their lives in the jungle. Mr. Marshall alone had escaped, and it was he who had been met by the treasure hunters, only just in the nick of time.

Now Mr. Marshall was the manager of the Choco Gold Mining Company, and had been travelling with a valuable cargo of gold ingots. An armed expedition had to be sent into the jungle to find the wrecked plane and recover the gold, so the treasure hunters were asked to go with it to act as guides.

So that was how the men got their *Guaca* after all. They had saved the manager's life, and they had been the means of the Company's recovering its lost gold. When all was safely brought back, they each received a reward which was big enough to make them seem like rich men. There had indeed been a hidden treasure in the forest. There had been a lost man, dying and in urgent need of help. This, surely, was better than digging for dead gold, to find a needy man and save his life. That in itself would have been a reward well worth while. But they got actual riches too. They got their *Guaca*. And they got it not by dreaming about it, nor even by searching for it, but by forgetting their own affairs to care for a man in need.

This is a lesson for us all. There is a hidden treasure for us also. We live in a dark world, where there are many needy and suffering people. Let us seek to bring them from the darkness to the light, from death in sin to eternal life in Christ Jesus. So shall we find more hidden treasure than we ever dreamed of; and it will be lasting treasure too, treasure in heaven. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12. 3).

H. F.

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

IV. THE GREAT INVITATION

WE turn now to Luke xiv, to what is called the story of the Great Supper and the Great Invitation. It might be thought that this story has very little relationship to what we have been considering. But I want to correct that idea immediately and to say that it is an integral part of this very matter of

the kind of people that God has set His heart upon, who are to be the fruit of Christ's travail.

There are two applications of this story. There is what we may call the dispensational interpretation, and there is the wider interpretation and application in relation to the Kingdom of God.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

A TIME OF TRANSITION

The dispensational interpretation finds this story closely related to what was happening at the time that the Lord Jesus spoke these words. It was in the time of the great transition from Israel to the Church, from Judaism to Christianity. The utterances of the Lord Jesus in these chapters, including the so-well-known fifteenth chapter of Luke, containing the parables of the lost things—the lost coin, the lost sheep and the prodigal son—these utterances were all of a piece, and were probably gathered into the last week of our Lord's ministry.

If you go back to the Gospel by Matthew and take it up at say chapter xxi and move right on, you will recognise that these are undoubtedly the closing days. What is being said here has to do with His going and the great crisis which was immediately in view—the crisis of the Cross. In chapter xxi He has made that statement to the Jews, to Israel as a nation after the flesh: "Therefore . . . the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof", and then straight into chapter xxii, and to a story about a king who made a marriage supper for his son, very similar to this one in Luke xiv. The same kind of invitations went out.

Now this story in Luke is all of a piece with that: it circles round the great crisis, Israel is about to be set aside, rejected; the Kingdom of Heaven is about to be taken away from them, and to be given to a nation which would bring forth the fruits of that Kingdom—the nation to which Peter later referred when he spoke of believers in Christ as a "holy nation". It would be not another nation on this earth, but God's own people out of the nations of this world, the people for His Name. So you see, this story in its historic setting relates to that great crisis, that great transition, that change-over: the rejection of one people and the putting in their place of another. We have to read the story in the light of that, for here we have the death-knell of Israel after the flesh.

WHO SHALL ENTER THE KINGDOM?

And, as I said, it is in keeping, in the main, with what we are considering at the present—a people, a kind of people, secured by God through the travail of His Son in the Cross. I think that is the outstanding thing in this story and in these stories, the kind of people that will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a much larger application and interpretation than the immediate, for it applies to the whole meaning of the Kingdom of God. And

that is a matter of supreme, of superlative importance—who will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. Here we have the Gospel of the Kingdom, there is no doubt about it.

There are certain very clearly defined features to this story of the Great Supper and the Great Invitation. Firstly, we find here God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and speaking as by His mouth, for what He says is what came from God. God is here taking up a common, social custom, a feast, and bringing it into use in relation to the Gospel of the Kingdom. We notice, of course, that Jesus was, at the time when He gave this story, at a feast. If you look at the earlier part of the chapter, you will see that He went to a feast that was made by a prominent Pharisee, evidently a wealthy man, in a good position, because certain very important people—in their own eyes at any rate—came in and took the top places. Jesus noted all that and had something to say about it. But the point is: it was a feast and Jesus went to it, and it says that they watched Him. Now there is a great deal of detail that we leave untouched, but we note that Jesus took hold of this and enlarged it in relation to the Kingdom of God, that is, He took up this common social custom of a feast and used it for Gospel purposes, to interpret the Gospel, to interpret the Kingdom of Heaven, to interpret the whole matter of who would and who would not get in at the feast.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACCEPTANCE

APPRECIATION — APPETITE — FELLOWSHIP

Now there are certain things about this feast which, although not exactly stated, are quite evidently implied. We might note three of them. A certain man made a feast and sent out his servant with invitations. The implication is that that man would be respected and honoured. He would not have done it if he had thought that he was in disfavour and that no one would accept his invitation. He was assuming that they would respect him and his invitation, and be quite glad to go to his feast and to be with him in his house. Now that is quite simple, but you will see what it means as we go on. It is the assumption that the invitation would be welcomed and that he would be in good standing with them, and they would give him respect and honour and respond suitably to the invitation and would go to his feast. The second thing that is assumed is that the invited people would have an appetite for a feast. A feast might not interest some people very much: they would turn down any invitation purely on the ground that they have no

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

appetite for such things, or there is something wrong with their digestion ; they just could not face it all. But it is assumed here that the people who were invited would have an appetite for the feast, for the provision. That is very simple. And then, of course, the third thing that is assumed is that they would be quite happy to meet other people in this house and have good intercourse and fellowship, have a good time together. These are things which are part of any feast of this kind. We are glad to go and meet the host, glad to go and meet the other people, and we are glad to have what is provided. That is the atmosphere ; these are the elements of this very thing. Dismiss any of them, and you dismiss the whole point of a feast: the feast breaks down at once.

THE FORBEARING GRACE OF GOD

Now, Jesus is not speaking casually. He knows, He has a very deep and comprehensive knowledge, indeed: He knows God's mind. Now note this: God foreknew the refusal that would come to His invitation: the foreknowledge of God, His omniscience made Him to know that this would be the reaction—they would not accept, they would not come. And Jesus knew that, otherwise He would not have said all these things, especially perhaps that consummate thing: "Therefore . . . the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof". He knew what the issue would be, God knew what the reaction would be, but God did not act upon His foreknowledge in this matter—He sent out the invitation. In that is one of the great Gospel principles. God, who foreknows all about men and their reactions to His invitation and His great provision, does not begin from that point and say, 'I know they won't accept, and I know it will be to their doom, therefore I will never invite them, I will doom them right away in My foreknowledge.' "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world . . ." Whatever God may know about men's refusal, He leaves the door wide open, He always takes the positive line in grace, never the negative line in judgment. That is one of the great things about the Gospel. Though He knows, nevertheless, God comes right out in infinite grace and opens the door wide and makes His appeal and says, "Come, for all things are now ready". You see, God keeps back that foreknowledge of His while He tries in grace to make a way. It is a tremendous thing that, the grace of God holding back the judgment of God until the thing is settled

by man himself. He knows the truth, and yet He does not, in the first instance, act according to His knowledge of men's reactions, He acts in grace to give them an opportunity to respond.

But note that there is something else involved in this. God removes all ground upon which man's doom could be laid to His charge. In the end it will never be possible for any doomed man or woman to say: 'You never gave me a chance, You never gave me an opportunity, the door was never opened to me, the way was never provided.' No, God removes all that ground. You see, in His grace and His mercy He takes all the ground of the possibility of His own condemnation away and puts the whole issue upon man. If anybody misses all that God has provided and calls them unto, it will be their own fault entirely. God is seeing to that. He puts it back on us.

CONDITION INDICATED BY THE CHOICE

Now, as we read a story like this, it looks on the face of things as though—and now put God into the place of the man who makes the feast and sends out the invitations—it looks as though He assumes that those invited will respect Him, honour Him, and give Him credit for being worthy of their acceptance. It looks as though God assumes that, Of course, He knows, but nevertheless He proceeds upon this basis, and in His procedure He is appealing to man to give some expression to and some proof of his respect for God ; and if man does not respond to God's appeal and invitation, it means that man has no respect for God, he has not given God His place, he has put Him out, he thinks He is not worth considering. The implications are tremendous, are they not?

Further, it means that man has no appetite for the things of God. We have only to imagine these people, when they received the invitation, saying, 'Well, now, I don't care about his feast, I don't think I want to go, I have not much of an appetite for that.' Ah, yes, but look: that very desire or absence of desire for the things of God is the deciding factor—the Kingdom or not the Kingdom. Jesus had elsewhere said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." There is something bound up with this appetite or the lack of it. The same applies to this matter of the people of God. It is very discriminating. To refuse means, not only that I have no interest in God and His things, but that I do not want to have any association with His people. All this, you see, is forcing a choice.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

GOD THE ONLY JOY OF HIS PEOPLE

Now, if we turn that round, it is surely not difficult to see what kind of people will inherit the Kingdom, what kind of a seed this will be that He shall see as of the travail of His soul. A people, in the first place, who, above all other things, desire God: and then, who desire God's things, to feed upon them: and then, who desire God's people. It is a remarkable thing, is it not, how that takes place and becomes the very constitution, the make-up and nature of children of the Kingdom of Heaven. One thing that is pre-eminent with them is their love for God, their desire for God; that He is their joy—not only their chiefest joy, but really their only joy. It is a wonderful thing that happens in us. Something happens, something takes place so that we come to the state where we just cannot live without God. If there should be an hour in our life when any shadow comes between us and God, that is the darkest hour, the most wretched time. He has spoilt us for all but Himself, He has made Himself indispensable to us, we cannot get on without Him. It is not only a matter of cannot, we have no desire to, we just long to be in His presence. Our hearts cry with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God". It is like that, something happens inside.

THE ONENESS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

Now that is a test as to whether we are children of the Kingdom or not, and a test as to whether we are going to inherit the Kingdom. It would be a poor look-out for anybody who had not that disposition to have to live in the presence of God for all eternity, it would be a very miserable thing. But it will not happen, of course. And what is true in that connection is true in these other two things. Something happens to us so that *our* company, *our* people—may I use the word?—*our* set, is the people of God. We have to move in this world, and we have to live with others, but we are not happy with them; there is no deep, basic, fundamental oneness between us, we belong to two different worlds. But with the people of God it is different: we are at home, we are in the family. It is something that happens to us, it is not something that we decide upon: that we are going to be Christians and mix with Christians, and have meetings. It is simply this: we long for the fellowship of God's people, and if we are deprived of it, we are deprived of our very life. I think that those who have very

much of it are sometimes in danger of losing the sense of its value, but if you were to ask some of those Christians who have to live in isolation, with little or no Christian fellowship, you would soon discover that something has happened in them. They long for this fellowship. These are the children of the Kingdom!

And as for the feast, the things of God spread for His children! Is not the coming together of the Lord's people, in some places in such large companies, an evidence, not only of the Lord's desire to provide, to spread a feast, but also of a deep hunger? There is something constitutional about this; there is an appetite. These are the children of the Kingdom. You see, God is working on that principle; discriminating, selecting, in order to give the Kingdom.

Now, we must go back to the story, to the other, disappointing, aspect. God in His grace, putting back in His foreknowledge the doom which He knows will most certainly come upon many who will react unfavourably to His invitation, putting that back and saying nothing about it for the moment, goes out in grace, inviting, inviting, inviting, in spite of His knowledge of them. It is a question of who will respond. So we see here what is really shown to be the case with many. They are totally indifferent to all these things: to Him, to His feast, and to His people; they are totally indifferent. They are not touched by the invitation, it makes no appeal to them, there is no sense that they are either under obligation or in peril of losing something of vital importance. And that is their judgment: that is their condemnation: that is their doom.

THE WILFULNESS OF HUMAN CHOICE

Now, let us look at this setting as to Israel, as to the Jewish nation. You remember how the Lord Jesus put this to them in another way. Weeping over Jerusalem, He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" . . . "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke xiii. 34, 35; xix. 44). Now note two things: "ye would not", "thou knewest not". But that was something in themselves, it was not that they *could* not, but that they *would* not. It was not that they could not know, it was because they would not know. They did not want to know. And they had decided that they were not going to know.

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

Now, God knows the heart, and it is not merely that we are like that. Somewhere, somehow we have taken an attitude: we have taken the attitude, 'I am not interested in that, I don't want that, that is not for me, I am not going that way.' "Thou wouldest not . . . thou knewest not . . .", when you might have known. That is always the ground of judgment.

Let us then look at these people. Whether they were actual people, whether it was a real story from life or what is called a parable, does not matter. The Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. They were not only indifferent, but would, when it came to the test, reject the invitation. And this is where we are found out, you know. When it really comes to it and someone says, 'Look here, the Lord wants you, the Lord calls you, the Lord has sent His Word to invite you to come', then we are found out; then the real attitude is disclosed. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse".

Excuses. I don't really know how far the Lord Jesus had a sense of irony or of humour. He presents one as saying, 'I have bought a piece of land and I must go and see it'. Now may I be quite blunt here: that is a thing that not one of you would do. If you did you would be a fool! Who would buy a piece of land without first of all having seen it! That is very lame; oh, no, that won't pass, that is not good enough. But you see, when we are really run to earth it is found out that we have no solid basis. We are just evading, we are trying to get round, we are looking for a back-door way out. It is an excuse, it is not a reason. Another man said, 'I have bought a yoke of oxen and I must go and prove them'. Well, what would practical farmers say to that! Is that the way of going about business, buying before having seen? You see how empty it is. The third man said he had married a wife, and therefore he could not come, but the Lord Jesus said that that was an excuse all the same. How was it an excuse? Something in the realm of natural affections was accounted of greater value than the Kingdom of God. And that is a poor excuse at best.

Now the point is, if we face the matter squarely, there is no really solid ground for this kind of reaction. It is a 'don't want', it is a failure to recognise the infinite seriousness and value of this Kingdom of God, this Gospel of the grace of God. It discloses a state of heart and mind and will which in itself is the ground of rejection. "Therefore . . . the Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." And what are the fruits?

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thirsting for the living God, a sense of real business, not this prevarication and excuse. These are the conditions of inheriting the Kingdom.

And, of course, these conditions are capable of very far-reaching, widely-extending application. They touch so many things, they are principles. But it is not just the immediate connection, it is that which is betrayed, the attitude of heart.

'Well', says the Lord, 'none of those shall come to my feast, none of those shall enter or inherit the Kingdom. Go out', He says to His servant, 'into the streets and the lanes of the city, and call the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame'; and the servant comes back and says, 'It is done, I have brought them in and yet there is room'. 'Out again into the highways and hedges, compel them to come in, the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame, the vagabonds, the wayfarers.' Jesus said to the Jewish leaders: "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom before you". On this principle we see who they are that will inherit the Kingdom, and not only get into it initially, but who will come into all the fulness that the Lord has provided. And what a vast fulness it is! We could profitably dwell upon this feast and what there is in it. Paul speaks much about it himself: "Blessed . . . with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). How much there is in this inheritance, this Kingdom!

THE CONTRAST — A CONSCIOUSNESS OF NEED

And who is it that enters in? Those who know their own poverty. These people did not know that, they were independent, they did not need the provision that had been made, they felt they could get on quite well without it. They had no sense of their own poverty. They were in the grip of pride, not poverty. The maimed—those who had suffered in life, whom life had treated cruelly, who on the way had met with hurt, damage; who were marred and marked. The blind who longed to see; from whom a whole world was shut out—if only their eyes could see. The lame—poor people who found it very difficult and very hard going, who were limited in their capacity and were knowing it. And what shall we say about the vagabonds and wayfarers from the highways and the hedges? You see, they are all people who, in some way or another, had a consciousness of need, and that is the great contrasting factor here. You will go a long way if that is your consciousness. You will go a long way in the things of God, if you really

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

have heart hunger, if yours is really a heart set upon the Lord and His things and His Church.

Now this is a challenge, a solemn challenge to us all—both to Christians and to those who are not the Lord's alike. He calls, He has made a great provision, He is dealing with us in infinite grace and not in judgment. He has placed everything open to us and said: "Come, for all things are now ready". Oh, we Christians know that little phrase "all things", do we not? Go to Paul's letters again and collect up all the occurrences of that phrase, "all things . . .", "all things . . ." "All things in Christ", that is the great theme, is it not? And what a vast 'all things' that comes to be when we look into it. All things! "Come, for all things are now ready." It is a challenge to those who have not come at all. But it is a challenge to us who have come. There is a range and a depth of those 'all things' that you and I have never yet fathomed. It is all so much a matter of where our heart is—whether we really mean business, or whether we can be put off, be like these people and make excuses. It is a challenge.

And it is a test of capacity for appreciating the things of God. May I say this as the last word: Blessed be God, when we get there, we shall no longer be poor and maimed and blind and vagabonds. There is a wonderful healing that goes on as soon as we get into the Kingdom, all these things clear up. Now you see, Jesus had taught the Kingdom of God in action. He was teaching the Kingdom of God in action as much as in word. His life and His work were a demonstration of the meaning of the Kingdom. He healed the maimed and the lame, He opened the eyes of the blind, He called the poor and the needy, publicans, sinners and harlots, and cleansed them. He demonstrated in action the Kingdom of God. And that is what happens. When we come, we find that in that Kingdom there is a tree, and the leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations. He is the tree, and there is a healing that takes place. And when we

are in, thank God, humbly we are able to say, 'Yes, my eyes have been opened, my faltering steps have been strengthened, my wounds have been healed, my wanderings in the highways and bye-ways have ceased, my vagabond life has been redeemed.' That is what happens, that is the Gospel of the Kingdom. Are you going to make excuses to avoid all that? It is not worth it, is it? It is nonsense. They are mere empty excuses. May God give us to see the tremendous divide made by the invitation.

God's offer can be missed, it can be lost, it can be put beyond reach. Do not forget, there stands in this world the greatest object-lesson that ever God has given to men of this very thing. You remember the place that the Jewish nation once had with God in blessing and prospering, yes, in favour. What a place they had! And then God called them into the Kingdom of His Son, and they began to make excuses, they showed that they were not interested in that. Look at them! For these two thousand years, vagabonds on the earth, without a kingdom and a home, wounded, blinded—Paul says, "Blindness hath happened to Israel"—they are all in these conditions. They are in rejection, and what suffering, and what they have lost! They have lost the Kingdom of Heaven. That is the most terrible demonstration and object-lesson of what it means to lose the Kingdom of Heaven. But mark you, that is only an illustration in the temporal realm. Our peril is of it being in the eternal realm. One does not like speaking like that, but there it is. Here is a tremendous issue.

Well, there was one of their own number who responded and came. His testimony afterward was: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision". And that man went a long, long way. That was none other than the Apostle Paul himself. The Lord incline our hearts to respond. He says: "Come, for all things are now ready". May our heart say, 'I am coming, Lord, and I am coming now'.

T. A-S.

AN
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

will be held, the Lord willing, at

HONOR OAK

SATURDAY, August 3, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, August 4, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, August 5, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

It is hoped that brothers from East and West will share the ministry.

JULY — AUGUST, 1957.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during April and May, 1957.

Abergavenny £1 ; Amsterdam, Holland 10s., £1 ; Arosa, Switzerland £1 ; Belfast £3 ; Bideford £2 ; Boscombe £2 ; Bracknell 10s. ; Bratton Fleming 10s. ; Brighton 10s., 10s. ; Bristol 2s. 6d. ; Bromley 10s., 5s., 5s. ; Burnley 2s. 6d. ; Calgary, Canada £15 4s. ; Chailey 10s. ; Claridge, South Africa £1 10s. ; Congleton £1 ; Copenhagen, Denmark £1 ; Crawley £1 ; Croydon 10s. ; Davis, California £2 ; Deal £1, £1 ; Drumnadrochit 10d., 2s. 6d. ; Dunbar 10s. ; Dunston-on-Tyne £1 ; East Corinth, Maine £6 ; Edinburgh 5s. ; Fontainemelon, Switzerland £3 4s. 8d. ; France £12 ; Glasgow £1, £1, £2, £1 ; Greenock £3 10s. ; Hackensack, New Jersey £1 15s. 3d. ; Hamilton, New Zealand £1 ; Hastings 5s., £3 ; Hespeler, Canada £1 ; Hoddesdon 1s. 3d. ; Holland £4 10s. ; Honiton £1 ; Hove £2, £1 ; Kew 10s. ; Kings Lynn £1 1s. ; Kingswood £1 ; Leeds £1 ; Little Madeley 10s. ; Llanelly 4s. ; London E.11—£1 ; E.13—£1 10s. ; N.7—£1 ; N.W.10—10s. ; S.E.7—10s. ; S.E.9—£1 10s. ; S.E.12—10s. ; S.E.21—5s. ; S.E.23—7s., 5s., £4, £1, £1 ; S.W.4—£2 ; S.W.18—10s. ; S.W.20—5s. ; W.13—5s. ; Long Beach, California £17 12s. 1d. ; Los Angeles, California £3 10s. 5d. ; Mablethorpe £1 ; Manchester 4s. 6d. ; Mansfield £1 4s. 4d. ; Mishawaka, Indiana £1 10s. ; Mitcham £1 ; Morecambe 2s. 6d. ; Mosgiel, New Zealand £1 ; Neath 3s. ; Newcastle-on-Tyne 10s., 10s., £2 ; Orpington 5s. ; Parkstone £1 ; Perth £3 ; Pforzheim, Germany £2 8s. ; Plymouth £1 10s. ; Pompaples, Switzerland £2 ; Quantico, Virginia £1 15s. 5d. ; Queens Village, New

York £3 10s. 5d. ; Reading £1 ; Ripe 2s. 6d. ; Romford 10s. ; Roseville, Michigan £1 ; Saskatoon, Canada £3 14s. ; Sandown £1 ; Sawbridge-worth 10s. ; Schlieren, Switzerland £2, £2 ; Southampton 10s. ; Southborough £1 ; South Shields 5s., 2s. 6d., 10s., 5s. ; Stockton-on-Tees £1 ; Stowmarket £1 ; Strete £1 ; Summer Hill, Australia 5s. ; Sunbury 10s. ; Tampere, Finland 7s. 3d. ; Thorpenext-Norwich £3 ; Tonbridge £3 ; Tyrley £5 ; Uckfield 5s. ; Watford 10s. ; Welling 10s. ; Willowdale, Canada £1 10s. ; Wolhusen, Switzerland £7 19s. 9d. ; Woodford Green 7s. 6d. ; Worthing 5s., 10s. ; York 10s., 10s. ; Zurich, Switzerland £1 12s. 4d.

Total £196 2s. 0d.

Abington, Pa. \$3 ; Arlington, Va. \$3, \$2 ; Chester, Pa. \$1 ; Collingswood, N.J. \$1 ; Copenhagen, Denmark \$5 ; Detroit, Mich. \$10 ; Hollis, N.Y. \$5 ; Kabul, Afghanistan \$20 ; Louisville, Ky. \$10, \$30 ; Maryville, Tenn. \$1 ; Minneapolis, Minn. \$2 ; Montclair, N.J. \$5 ; Orlando, Fla. \$1.40 ; Oroville, Calif. \$1 ; Philadelphia, Pa. \$2 ; San Diego, Calif. \$1 ; Wheatland, Wyo. \$2

Total \$105.40

Bracken, Sask. C.\$1 ; Masefield, Sask. C.\$2 ; Sicamous, B.C. C.\$3.50 ; Toronto, Ont. C.\$25

Total C.\$31.50

Girgarre, Australia A£1. 0s. 0d.
 Hong Kong H.K.\$16.00
 Bombay, India Rs.10/-
 Amsterdam, Holland N.Z.£1 0s. 0d.
 Gumligen, Switzerland Sw. Frs.40.00

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

By T. A-S.

A companion volume to *What it means to be a Christian*.
 Price: 4/6d (Postage 6d) In U.S.A. \$0.96 (Postage 5 cents)

Three booklets

THE GOD OF THE AMEN By T. A-S.
 THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE By H. F.
 SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (Consecration) By W. L.
 Price: 2d each (1/6d a dozen ; postage 3d)
 In U.S.A. \$0.04 ea. (\$0.32 a dozen ; postage 3 cts.)

WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

By T.A.S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS	7/- (\$1.50)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY	5/6 (\$1.18)
WHAT IS MAN?	5/- (\$1.07)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY	4/- (\$0.85)
THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY	
Vol. 1 All Things in Christ	3/6 (\$0.75)
Vol. 2 The Mystery	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL I)	2/6 (\$0.53)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION	2/6 (\$0.53)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS	1/- (\$0.21)
GOD HATH SPOKEN	1/- (\$0.21)
IN CHRIST	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION	3d (\$0.05)
VISION AND VOCATION	2d (\$0.04)
SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
UNION WITH CHRIST IN CONSECRATION	2d (\$0.04)
THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXEMPLARY	
CHRISTIAN LIFE	2d (\$0.04)
THE MEASURE OF CHRIST	2d (\$0.04)
THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD	2d (\$0.04)
THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE	
LORD JESUS	2d (\$0.04)
THE SERVICE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
ON KNOWING THE LORD	2d (\$0.04)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN	2d (\$0.04)
ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE	2d (\$0.04)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
<i>(The Zero hour of the Creation)</i>	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF	1d (\$0.02)
WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?	3d (\$0.05)
	2/6 a dozen (\$0.53)

By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
<i>(For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated)</i>	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
<i>(For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated)</i>	5/- (\$1.07)

By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
STANDING WITH THEM	1d (\$0.02)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY	2d (\$0.04)
READY FOR THE KING	
<i>(For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated)</i>	1/6d (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH	
<i>(For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated)</i>	2/- (\$0.43)

By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE <i>(The Way of Salvation)</i>	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST	9d (\$0.16)

By W.N.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE	3d (\$0.05)
WASTE!	2d (\$0.04)

By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF	2d (\$0.04)
THIS MINISTRY	
<i>(Series of Messages given at Honor Oak)</i>	
Volume II	9d (\$0.16)
Volume III	1/- (\$0.21)

POSTAGE AND PACKING. For postage and packing please add the following to the total amount of the books ordered :

	In the United Kingdom.	Elsewhere (except U.S.A. & Canada)
Single copies of booklets price 4d and under	2d	1½d
Single copies of booklets price 6d to 9d	4d	2d
Single copies of booklets price 1/- to 1/6	6d	3d
<i>Otherwise:—</i>		
Orders totalling less than 5/- please add	4d in the shilling	2d in the shilling
Orders totalling between 5/- and £2 please add	2d in the shilling	1d in the shilling
Orders totalling more than £2 please add	2/- in the £	1/- in the £

In U.S.A. and Canada.

Single copies of booklets price \$0.30 and under please add 2 cents. Otherwise please add 4 cents in the dollar.

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to THE EDITOR, A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY, 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23.

Literature may be obtained from:—In U.S.A.—Almquist Christian Book Nook, 330, Division Street, Northfield, Minnesota or Westmoreland Avenue Chapel, 1505, South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles 6, California.—In India—Dr. A. I. Kinnear, 6, Brunton Road, Bangalore 1, or from Evangelical Literature Service (Mr. Donald J. David), 1/38, Vepery High Road, Madras 3.

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

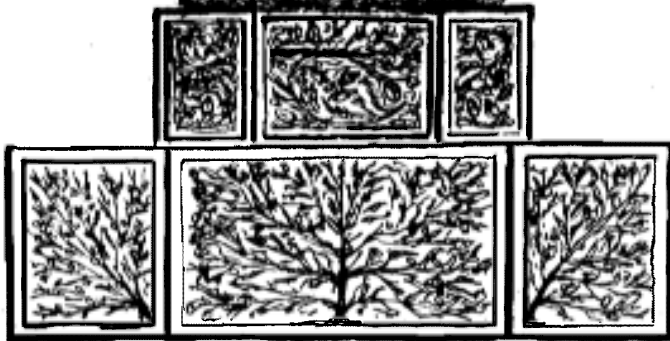
Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone: FORest Hill 4609.

"A Candlestick of Pure Gold: of Beaten Work"

Exodus 25, 31.

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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



Vol. 35. No. 5.

September, 1957.

THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1957.

Vol. 35. No. 5.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	...	...	...	...	97	THE AUGUST CONFERENCE	...	...	...	104
HIS LIFE THROUGH OUR DEATH	...	...	...	...	100	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	...	...	...	111
THE ISRAEL OF GOD (v)		...	...	...	113					

EDITORIAL

THE RELEASE OF THE LORD

(Continued)

THE STARTING PLACE OF THE TESTIMONY IN EVERY NATION

IN our last issue our particular emphasis was upon the nature of the "testimony of Jesus." We saw that the great, objective, historic fact, that Jesus was risen from among the dead and was in the place of supreme sovereignty and glory—which fact had been manifested by many infallible proofs—had also a subjective counterpart: namely, within the men who were His "witnesses". That same Lord Jesus had become to them, by the Holy Spirit, an inward reality, and that inward fact was manifested as a life: "eternal life," resurrection life, life triumphant over death; Divine life in all its holiness, energy, spontaneity, might, persistence, and fruitfulness; in fact, the life which the Lord Jesus *is*, in Person. (See I John i. 2, v. 9 - 13, 20, r.v.; Acts i. 8, 22, ii. 32, 36, iii. 15, iv. 33, v. 30, 32, x. 40 - 42, xiii. 30, 37; Romans i. 4, r.v.) The testimony to the Person of Jesus is the power of His life in and through His "members" by the Holy Spirit.

Our present object will be to show something more of what this means in experience and service, especially in connection with the age-purpose of a testimony in the nations. If comparisons and contrasts are made and disorders pointed out, it is not in a spirit of criticism, far less of censoriousness; neither is it want of appreciation of, or esteem for, the work being so honestly and sacrificially done. God forbid that any word of ours should bring a shadow upon any activity which counts even a little for Him. We have a burden—a sometimes overwhelming burden—occasioned both by the spiritual ineffectiveness (partial or complete) that we see around, and by the manifest misconception and confusion that prevails regarding Divine ends and methods. It is the need for immediate, direct, absolute *spiritual* effectiveness that governs the pursuance of this subject.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Let us again state the all-inclusive basis and background of all true, victorious life and service. *It is the revelation of the Person of Christ crucified, in the Godhead, and in the throne of absolute sovereignty, and this objective fact becoming by the Holy Spirit a power in the life and a passion in the heart.*

It is the effect of this that lies behind all the great record of conquests in many regions, through many instruments. This goes behind, and makes unnecessary, all advocacy of 'foreign' or other missions. Not that such advocacy has been fruitless, for God has come through it; but its strenuousness and its costliness are the marks of spiritual decline, and are the characteristics of a system which speaks of a bondage in which the Lord's honour is involved. We shall best explain what we mean if we illustrate from history.

SOME NOTABLE EXAMPLES
OF MODERN TIMES

We have before us the records of movements and men that have been really effectual and fruitful in the world-testimony of the Lord Jesus.

Here is the amazing story of the great days of the Moravian missions. *In the first twenty years they actually sent out more missionaries than the whole Protestant Church had done in two hundred years.* Of the closed lands entered, the range covered, the sufferings gladly endured, the lives lived and laid down, the grace of God manifested, it stirs wonder and shame to read. Someone has said that 'if members of the Protestant churches went out as missionaries in corresponding numbers there would be a force of 400,000 foreign workers, which is vastly more than the number estimated as necessary to achieve the evangelisation of the world.'

Only for want of space do we reluctantly refrain from giving pages from this tremendous story; but what lay behind it?

In the first place the Cross had been deeply wrought into the very being of this people. Their country was made a field of blood by massacre. They were driven from their homes. From a population of three million they were reduced by persecution to one million. Indeed it sometimes appeared as if they would be entirely extinguished. Out of these fires of affliction there arose a company purified by the fire, and with another fire burning in their bones. It was the fire of a passionate love for the Lord Jesus. The meetings of these brethren, when they later became possible, breathed the atmosphere of "the upper room."

Covenants were made that self in all its forms should be entirely banished—self-will, self-love, self-interest, self-seeking. To be poor in spirit would be their quest, and everyone would give himself to be taught by the Holy Spirit. A prayer-watch was set up which should burn day and night, and by means of relays the entire twenty-four hours were occupied in seeking the Lord. 'To win for the Lamb that was slain the reward of His sufferings,' was their adopted motto.

All this is its own argument. Here a deeply wrought work of the Cross issued in a mighty, personal love for the Lord Jesus. Personal considerations were lost, and no persuasion was necessary. Shall we not say the truth when we say that souls languish by the million in darkness and death for want of a deep baptism of the Church—the company of saved ones—into the passion and love of God in Christ?

If the China Inland Mission has been a monument to anything as to God's methods, it is supremely so to the living reality of union with Christ. With all his vision and passion for inland China, it is well known that Mr. Hudson Taylor, as he went from place to place addressing gatherings of Christians in this and other countries, said very little about China, often nothing at all. He just poured out his spiritual message to bring the Lord's people into a fuller knowledge of the meaning of their union with Christ. The central and supreme thing in this fellowship with the Lord was *the universal efficacy of prayer.*

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

Were we to put the inner history of this work—the original spiritual background—into a few words, we should say that it was not a matter of organization, advocacy, propaganda, appeals, or advertisement. It centred in a man with a deep knowledge of God, born of a deeply wrought work of the Cross, bringing to the Lord's people a living, spiritual message as to their fullest life in Him, and as to the practical outworking of such a life through prayer. Mr. Hudson Taylor was no 'teacher' in the sense of presenting truth in a systematized form. He was not one of the great 'Bible teachers', in the generally accepted sense of that term. His was a message which immediately led to two issues: firstly, the relationship of the believer to the Lord; and then the practical outworking of that, in prayer and other forms of

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER, 1957.

service, to bring the Gospel to those whose only chance of receiving it was by means of such special endeavours. Mr. Hudson Taylor's life (and therefore, we must think, the history of the mission) turned at a given point upon a deeper realisation of what oneness with the Lord really means. This is revealed in a letter to his sister which is printed in the second volume of his *Life*.

Not only in Africa, through the South Africa General Mission, but in all parts of the world, the ministry of Dr. Andrew Murray has been wondrously rich in its fruits. It was not, again, by advocacy or propaganda, but purely by spiritual teaching, through a ministry almost exclusively to the Lord's people, a message concerning *practical holiness, the ministry of intercession, and the power of the Holy Spirit*, that this fruit was born. Out of this ministry sprang the above 'Mission', and the consecration of many lives to the Lord's service. The ministry, not the 'Mission', was the dynamic.

We could add at great length to the evidence, pointing to the influence of such lives, and to the power of the movement for the 'deepening of spiritual life'. The pages of the missionary issues of Christian periodicals; the messages of 'Keswick's' great men in those early days; and the pages of that monumental *History of the C.M.S.* by Dr. Eugene Stock, all bear testimony to this.

THE BASIC REALITY

The evidence is overwhelming that from Pentecost onward the basis of the fullest, richest, and most effectual world-testimony of Jesus has been a 'holiness movement from heaven': that is, a heart-changing, life-revolutionising, whole-being-captivating realisation of who Jesus is and what Jesus is—the first as to His Sovereignty in the Throne of Deity, and the second as to His Sovereignty in the life at all points. To be 'filled with the Holy Spirit' is to be filled with Holiness, Love, Humility, Joy, and a passion for securing to the "Beloved" the fruit of His travail in every nation. No 'spiritual' movement, convention, teaching, is valid without the hall-mark of spontaneous concern for the eternal well-being of others. Far too often intensive movements result in morbid introspection. There is nothing more paralysing than this. And the reaction from it is just as perilous. Enthusiasm, interest, high spirits, 'personality,' education, or enterprise, harnessed to a more or less dated 'decision for Christ', are frequently the points of emphasis in this reaction.

The cost to a convert in New Testament times

was too great to permit of anything that was superficial or merely a matter of romance or enthusiasm. The motive power must spring from a very real and deep knowledge of the Lord, balanced by an ardent passion for *His* satisfaction in the nations.

WHAT PENTECOST WAS

We have failed far too terribly to realise what 'Pentecost', and the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', really was. The external accompaniments and effects have obscured the deeper elements. We have interpreted it in terms of activity, signs, waves of emotion, excitability, and so forth. But our supreme need is to know the true meaning of this 'baptism'.

We therefore give the following all-inclusive definition. The baptism of the Holy Spirit means *the enthronement of the Lord Jesus as absolute Sovereign, without reservation or rival, in the entire life, in all its interests and activities.*

Within this compass there are one or two specific things which we may point out.

Firstly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a *baptism into the holiness of the Lord*. It is a baptism with *fire*, which must be interpreted, primarily, not as zest, but as sanctification. Pentecost was a 'holiness movement from heaven'. This was the significance of the terrible incident with Ananias and Sapphira. This holiness of the Lord, established by the *Holy Spirit*, has to be carried into every phase and department of life: spirit, mind, body; relationships, transactions, methods, means. Anything doubtful, questionable, equivocal, and so on, is a contradiction and an antagonism to the Spirit of Holiness. It is unfortunate that it should be necessary even to mention such things in the realm of the work of the Lord, but that necessity is laid upon us.

Secondly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a *baptism into the love of Christ*. This is another element in the 'fire.' It need hardly be said that this love is something more and other than natural warm-heartedness, largeness of nature, generosity, sentiment and nice words. It is love which 'suffers long, envies not, knows no jealousy, makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is not puffed up, never rejoices in self-vindication when opponents are proved wrong, is always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, never seeks its own ends or interests.' This love knows how to be abased, to be set aside, to be outshone; how to have its interests crossed; how to persist when forsaken; and much more. Only the Holy Spirit can impart and maintain this love.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Thirdly, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the *baptism into the war of the ages*. Not into a religious playground or sports field, but into the grim, terrific, bloody conflict with "principalities and powers," with "the world rulers of this darkness", with "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places". Immediately upon our Lord's baptism, the Spirit came upon Him, and He was brought, there and then, by the act of the Spirit, into awful contact with the leader of the opposing hierarchy. So it was with the Church. So it is with every one baptized into Christ. Thank God, the victory has been secured and the issue settled at Calvary, but the fight continues. It will take the mighty energizing of the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts—"strengthened with power through his Spirit in (lit. "into") the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16)—in all the efficacy of the Precious Blood, to accomplish the deepest work of God in this age. There will be times when we are unable to work, or to preach, or to do anything but 'stand and withstand.' Many are contented while they can be active and do something. This can be a real snare. It is spiritual vitality that counts, not much busy-ness.

A PRACTICAL INSTANCE

We will conclude with an incident from the story of Uganda which carries its own significance.

HIS LIFE THROUGH OUR DEATH

Reading: II Corinthians iv.

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry . . . we faint not" (II Corinthians iv. 1).

TO assert that, when Paul was tempted to give up, it was his ministry which kept him going, may sound all wrong. There is a sense in which it is indeed wrong for us to be kept going by the impetus of our work for the Lord. There is no doubt that many, of whom this has been true, have been found out when they were no longer able to be active in the works which they had been doing. They were not really living on the Lord, but on their own sense of importance or satisfaction with their particular labours. When the works could no longer be undertaken, then they have found themselves left with a quite inadequate knowledge of life and joy in Christ. It is quite wrong to find our zest of life and satisfaction of heart merely in what we are doing.

Paul, however, did not mean this. It was not just 'ministry' which kept him from fainting, but

In the early days of the Church in Uganda, a boy who had been baptized came to Pilkington and told him of his failure to be true to Christ in the pathetic words, 'I sin as much as ever I did.' Pilkington was cut to the quick, and the desire for fresh spiritual power was deepened in his heart. Shortly afterwards he went apart on to one of the islands in the Victoria Nyanza that he might wait upon God and receive fresh power from Him. His prayers were answered, and later he could write to Bishop Tucker as follows:

'I want to tell you that we (mission and people) are in the midst of a time of great blessing. God has enabled several of us to see that for a long time past we have been working in our own strength, and that consequently there has been no power in our lives, and very little blessing. We have, however, been brought to see that the command "be filled with the Spirit" is as much laid upon us as upon the Ephesians, and that power for effectual service is placed at our disposal if we will but appropriate it. I cannot tell you the difference it has made to us in our lives as well as in our work. Now we are full of joy, whereas a little while ago (I am speaking of myself in this) the depression was almost unbearable. As for our work, God is now using us, and a wonderful wave of blessing is passing over the land.'

THE EDITOR.

"this ministry". Here he tells us what this ministry is: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (iv. 10-12).

LIFE OUT OF DEATH

This was his life's work—and it is ours. We have been made for this. "Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God", the "very thing" being "that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (v. 4, 5). There is no need for any who are in Christ to wonder why they are here, for in this verse it is clearly stated. The Lord has this definite objective for us, He made us with this very end in view, that in us there should be a clear demonstration of the power of the resurrection life of Christ to triumph over all death, to "swallow up" what is mortal.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

This, then, is to be our experience, and this experience is to constitute our ministry. It is our life's work to have through us a constant demonstration of the mighty miracle of the resurrection of Christ. And, being a mighty miracle, it represents a complete reversal of normal human experience.

(a) THE END

In human life everything is finally swallowed up by death. Death is the invariable conclusion of everything which belongs to this earth. However promising it may have been, however many values it may have held for a time, however long-delayed the final dissolution may be—death is the end. God never made man for this. Such a tragedy was far from His purpose. But man has come to this. Apart from that new realm of the Spirit, even the highest aims and noblest deeds will perish in the grave.

In the realm of the Spirit, however, it is just the reverse. Death is swallowed up of life. It is no wonder that Paul was kept from fainting, as he pursued his difficult and often painful ministry. He had a sure end in view; he knew the Divine goal: not death, but life—life out of death.

(b) THE PROCESS

Resurrection is not only the final goal of what is spiritual: it also represents a process, a continual experience of triumphing life. "*Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day*" (iv. 16).

This, too, is the very opposite of natural life. Man is all the time trying to hide the inward process of decay by outward renewing. People make themselves up, dress themselves up, put on a bold front, pretend; anything to cover up their inner experience. In Christ, however, we have a deeper life than that of the body, deeper even than the soul: we have life in the spirit. In this inner place the Holy Spirit is given as an earnest of the death-conquering experience of resurrection (v. 5), and He it is who answers every challenge in the outer man by a new measure of life within. A merely superficial verdict may say that Paul is older and feebler than he used to be, therefore his service for Christ is less. If this were the case, the Apostle might well feel tempted to faint. But he protests, "We faint not", explaining that the reason is to be found in this daily process of spiritual renewal and increase within.

He was really speaking, not so much of decay due to age, as of the deliberate sacrifice of the self-life and natural strength in the service of Christ. The whole letter is full of this thought. It is a part

of true ministry. But herein lies the miracle: for such service brings, not exhaustion, but renewal; it has a compensation *in us*, as well as value for those who are helped. If we are not being thus renewed, we may well question whether ours is a true ministry in the Spirit.

(c) THE EFFECT ON OTHERS

"*So then death worketh in us, but life in you*" (iv. 12). This, too, is the opposite of most human experiences. As a rule, men achieve their gains at the expense of others. Even if there is no deliberate exploitation, human life is so constituted that the element of competition is everywhere in operation. Promotion for one means dismissal or retirement for someone else; others must decrease—or disappear—if we are to increase. What a relief, then, to come into the realm of the Spirit where the very opposite is true. All God is waiting for is the opportunity to give new proofs of the power of Christ's life to meet every need. Our experience of death will provide this very opportunity.

This, then, is to be our experience and our ministry: continual resurrection. In order to explain this further, the letter shows us some of the wonderful paradoxes which are included in this great triumph of life over death.

JOY OUT OF SORROW

"*The . . . God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ*" (i. 3-5).

In a sense, this is the Gospel's offer to the sinner: his sorrows can be turned into joy if he will only find life in Christ. The only people who still went away sorrowful after meeting Jesus were those who, like the rich young ruler, were not prepared to yield to Him. Simple faith in Christ brings joy in place of sorrow. The classic example of this wonderful transformation was the man healed by Peter: without Christ he was helpless, beggarly and excluded, whereas in the Name of Jesus he was immediately able to begin "walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts iii. 8).

It is also the answer of Christ to all the general sufferings of life. There is a universal misapprehension that godliness means immunity from trouble. It is so often expected, even by believers themselves, that they will not be in trouble as other men. This is far from the truth. It is part of the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

calling of saints to show men how to suffer; how, even in the midst of the hard and bitter experiences of life, Christ can be sufficient to give joy and comfort.

The real context of the words, however, is the experience of God's servants who are suffering voluntarily out of love for their Lord. It is a part of our ministry, the Apostle is saying, to prove and to demonstrate how rich in blessing such sufferings can be. These verses provide the opening for a letter which seeks to set forth what constitutes true service for the Lord. Later on the Apostle lists in some detail the deep trials and afflictions which he himself had borne for Christ's sake (xi. 23 - 27). These were not hindrances to his ministry; they were not unfortunate accompaniments to it: they were a vital part of that ministry, for they meant that he had more of Christ to give to others. Although he had such a sombre story to unfold, the one word constantly recurring in the section is the word 'glory'.

There is a ring of reality and spiritual power about the life which has shared in the afflictions of Christ. This is not because affliction has any value *of itself*; it is because by this means more of Christ may come into the life. There is a direct proportion between the suffering and the glory. As the afflictions abound so does the power of Divine grace abound also.

Paul gives more than a hint that only by resolute faith could he enter into this triumph of joy over sorrow. He had been in danger of being sorry for himself, as the Corinthians had been inclined to be sorry for him. He was able to dispel their own doubts and questions by relating how he himself had been brought out of the darkness of despair—namely, by realising that the purpose of it all was to produce an up-to-date trust in "God who raiseth the dead" (i. 9). If our glorying is to be more than empty words, if our joy is to have a mighty ministry of blessing to others, then it can only be by the constant miracle of resurrection life. It must be joy out of sorrow.

LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS

"Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (iv. 6).

The historical event referred to in this verse was not the one described in the account of the fourth day of the Creation, when the sun and the moon were appointed as 'lights' in the darkness (Genesis i. 14), but that which took place on the

first day, when the primæval darkness was pierced by the very first rays of *Light*. What did that first day's light represent? Was it something miraculous—not the sun's rays penetrating into the darkness, but the Spirit's Presence flooding the earth with light? We do not know. But we do know that the spiritual counterpart is indeed a miracle: it is light, not merely shining into darkness, but shining out of it.

This ministry brings the outshining of God's own Presence. It means more than intellectual 'enlightenment', for the description of the shining face refers to character rather than ideas. This is light in the heart rather than in the mind. It is not the mental light that makes a man a 'know-all', but the light which enables him to walk in humble communion with his Lord. It is not the popular light of impressive brilliance, but the heavenly light of Christ-like purity; not a superior aloofness, by reason of remoteness from all shadows, but the ascendancy which triumphs over all the shadows by faith.

To have this light does not mean to understand everything, for Paul described himself as being "perplexed" (iv. 8). This is strange—perplexed, and yet flooded with light! It is one more feature of the paradoxes involved in this ministry. Those who have a history of spiritual things will not need to be told what it means to have no explanation of what is happening, or why, and yet to have a heart filled with light. Humanly speaking we may be walking in the dark, and yet all the time be radiant with the knowledge of Christ.

WEALTH OUT OF POVERTY

"As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (vi. 10).

Wealth has a meaning only as it fulfils a purpose. The simplest description of a rich man is 'a man who has perfect satisfaction and absolute security'. If this be so, then the Apostle was indeed a wealthy man. As to satisfaction, he could affirm: "But we have this *treasure* in earthen vessels . . ." (iv. 7). Life in Christ to him meant great treasure, 'the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord', which was infinitely more valuable and precious than all the prizes of this world. "As having nothing"—that would be the superficial judgment concerning his position in this world—"and yet possessing all things"—that was the richly satisfied state of his heart. As to security, ". . . we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (v. 1). Here is security indeed. Even if, from a human

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

standpoint, the worst happens—"if the earthly house of our bodily frame be dissolved" (R.v.mg.)—we know that we have such an eternal dwelling place.

This wealth, like the other blessings, is on an entirely different basis from the normal human one. By letting go of everything for Christ, Paul had found all in Him. By repudiating all merely earthly security, he had found in Christ the true, the eternal. Great wealth, moreover, means more than what is personal: it involves providing others with these very blessings of satisfaction and security on a lavish scale. By this standard Paul was an immensely wealthy man. "As poor, yet making many rich".

This was not only true of Paul, but of all the true ministers of Christ. He himself could have told many a story of those who gave up all to become poor for Christ, and yet who had been dispensing wealth on a lavish scale ever since. Think of Barnabas. He sold his field and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet (Acts iv. 36, 37). For Christ's sake he deliberately impoverished himself; he let go of all that was his own by rights. Yet see the kind of man he became! The apostles called him the "Son of Consolation", for though poor himself he brought enrichment into many lives. He enriched Paul himself (ix. 27); he enriched the first Gentile church at Antioch (xi. 22 - 26); he went much farther afield in company with Paul (xiii. 1 - xv. 35), dispensing untold spiritual wealth to many. It was wealth out of poverty, the unsearchable riches of Christ communicated through one who had let go of all for Christ's sake.

The same spiritual principle worked out in the lives of those in humbler positions than Barnabas. Think of the little Israelitish maid who waited on Naaman's wife (II Kings v. 2). From a human point of view she had nothing. A poor captive in a foreign land, young and insignificant, she was yet able to bring great enrichment into that important home and into that kingdom, as well as to get glory to the Lord, through Elisha, in Israel itself. Through her simple faithfulness and testimony, Naaman received health which could not be bought for all the thousands of gold and silver and changes of raiment that he offered (v. 5, 16), nor indeed for the combined wealth of the royal courts of Syria, Israel, and the entire ancient world. When Naaman returned to his home, healed in body and changed in heart, the little slave girl knew that she had been God's means of bringing about the transformation. What an inspiration this should be to us! What a pointer to the possibilities of faithful witness! Out of our deep poverty may come His

glorious wealth. Our emptiness can be the channel for His great fullness.

POWER OUT OF WEAKNESS

Paul's letter closes with his personal testimony to the way in which the power of Christ was made perfect in his personal weakness (II Cor. xii. 7 - 10).

Let us make no mistake about it—this new life is *all* of God. Even with the Apostle Paul the Lord could take no risks. He might try to preach Life out of Death in the power of his own flesh, or with some personal end in view. Even after years of deep experiences with the Lord he was capable at any time of taking things into his own hands and being strong in his own strength. For this reason the Lord saw fit to allow to happen to him something very painful and most perplexing. It was something which seemed at first to constitute a great hindrance to his ministry; so much so, indeed, that Paul besought the Lord earnestly for its removal. He felt that only when this was done could he truly serve the Lord; and so urgent did the matter seem that he cried to the Lord three times to be freed from the trial. So far as we know he never was freed. Yet he fulfilled his life's ministry. That "thorn in the flesh" was not hindering the ministry; it was an essential part of it. Not only must God's servant begin in weakness—he must continue as one weak in himself. Indeed, he must go through experiences which will weaken him still further, if he is to be a powerful witness to the life which overcomes death.

The fountain-head of all Divine energy is in the Cross; and at that same Cross all the old life of nature, all its wisdom and strength, are brought down to the grave. Paul, no doubt, with the best of motives, made the effort to shake off the crippling disability. With earnest prayer he entreated that he might be delivered and made strong, so that he might better serve the Lord. Then he found sufficiency of grace, not only to accept his weaknesses, but most gladly to glory in them; for he made the discovery—"when I am weak, then am I strong".

Such a recognition of the true nature of spiritual ministry can deliver us from much frustration and disappointment. It can help us to understand God's ways with us, and inspire us with new devotion to our Lord. Knowing that God had made him "for this very thing", and to this end given him "the earnest of the Spirit" (II Cor. v. 5), Paul made bold to continue: "Being therefore always of good courage . . .", and again: "We are of good courage, I say . . ." (vv. 6, 8). Our death is the opportunity for His life.

H. F.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE CONFERENCE AT HONOR OAK

AUGUST, 1957

"Gather my saints together unto me ; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalm l. 5).

"... bring my sons from far . . ." (Isaiah xliii. 6).

WITH such a command from the Lord, many days of earnest prayer and expectation preceded the Conference Gatherings on this occasion.

The gatherings were truly international in character, not only in that the Lord brought brethren from Far East and Far West and from the Continent of Europe to minister the Word, but also in that the largest company in our history from all parts of the world was found together over these days. Amongst the countries from which the Lord gathered many of His children were included: - China, Singapore, India, United States of America, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, as well as those of the United Kingdom.

The Opening Gathering.

After warmly welcoming our visitors, amongst whom were many new and many old friends, our brother, Mr. T. Austin-Sparks, brought the Lord's opening word, setting before us the course and, supremely, the Goal of the Christian Life (Heb. xiii. 1, 2 ; I Cor. ix. 24, 26 ; Gal. v. 7).

"LET US RUN". It is not so much the race or the running, but the Goal, the Prize, the object for running. Though much is said in the Word about Heaven *the place*, and its blessings, everything is centred in a *Person*—the Prize, the Lord Jesus.

In the beginning of 'Hebrews' there is a matchless setting forth of the Lord Jesus as *God's Son*, and all that follows is in the light of that ; and the culmination is—" . . . run . . . looking unto Jesus " ; He is the Goal, He is the Prize. The fulness and finality of God's Son is presented to faith. He comprehends all ; all centres and ends in Him, in what He is, and what He has done. With this in view as the Goal and the Prize the exhortation is: - "Let us run". Eternity alone will disclose the fulness and finality of Christ.

The RACE—the RUNNING. If the Goal and the Prize is Christ in this fulness, the race will resolve itself into overcoming all that is not of Christ. The Christian life is a course, a strenuous course, calling for the utmost consecration, concentration and

abandonment. There can be no progress unless there is something to work against. It is difficult to run on ice or deep sand—there must be something against which to push. It is a matter of overcoming the natural by the spiritual.

(1) 'Corinthians'. Here the utter difference between natural and spiritual is presented, as shown pre-eminently by the *natural mind* as against the *mind of the Spirit* ; the emphasis is—"he that is spiritual". The wisdom of this world, the philosophy of the Greeks, had been brought into the Church to govern. Paul plants the Cross between the natural and the spiritual—"Jesus Christ, and him crucified". The natural mind must come under the axe of the Cross. One of our greatest difficulties is this mind of ours, our mentality. The answer is—"the mind of Christ". To come to fulness we must leave the natural man behind and go on into, and in, the "mind of Christ". Paul was ready to submit everything to the judgment of the Cross. We need to know the "mind of the Spirit", for only thus can we run the race.

(2) 'Galatians'. "... running well . . . what hindered?" Here it is the natural man in the realm of the *emotions*. The Galatians were a temperamentally shallow nation ; the seed was received quickly but it did not produce a harvest. They were vociferous, they lived on their feelings. They illustrate the possibility of the impact and appeal of a great emotion, and then the disappearance of everything "when adversity ariseth . . ." If we are to run in the race, we need more than natural emotion: we need the mighty love of the Spirit, the love of Christ ; we need the mighty 'holding' of the Spirit. The love of Christ makes for the fulness of Christ. The Galatians were running in the impetus of the emotion of their beginnings. There is no progress if we live in our feelings.

(3) 'Hebrews'. Here the history of Israel is recalled. They set out, but failed to enter in. Psalm lxxviii. 37 gives the secret: "their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast . . ." Here it is a matter of the *will*. With the Jews it was prejudice that put them out of the race, and prejudice is a question of the will, not of the emotion or the mind—"ye will not . . ." With Christ Himself the battle raged all the time around the matter of "Thy will". *The all-inclusive ful-*

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

ness of Christ has come to us because of His infinite capacity for letting go. God gives when we let go. Runners need spiked shoes: we need more spiritual grip. Let us then "run with patience".

Saturday evening.

The second gathering was given up to the visiting brothers, each bringing warm loving greetings from their respective companies.

Brother D. Lugthart (of Holland), speaking by interpretation, brought before us the feasts of the Lord in the Old Testament, and was assured in his own heart that the Lord would have us make a feast in His presence during these days. As Christ was the fulfilment of the whole of the Old Testament, so He would be the feast. The first feature of a tent or tabernacle was that it was not too strongly tied down to the earth. In all the feasts two things held good: (1) There were to be no empty hands, and (2) each participant was to bring of the blessing of the Lord which he had received. Only the things which God supplies can afford a feast. Whatever we might have or might not have, everyone has a LAMB that has been slain, and also an earnest of the inheritance in the gift of the Holy Spirit. These are the glorious gifts that we may bring. We can bring purified gold, silver and precious stones. Though our light be but that of a candle, if we bring it, its light will be reflected by the gold and silver and the precious stones. Not one or two persons, but all, are to take part in the feast. The feast is a season of joy, as seen in 'Esther', a time of fulness of heavenly, Divine joy.

Brother R. Bissell (of Ranchi, India) followed, basing his message on the thought of "fellowship with one another" (I John i. 7; II John 12). He pointed out the difference between "face to face" fellowship and "paper and ink" fellowship. (1) Our fellowship is *in Christ* (I John i. 1-3). What we have seen, heard and handled of the Word constitutes the ground and substance of our fellowship. (2) The condition of our fellowship—"If we walk in the light" (v. 7). Fellowship is not merely outward, it is maintained by our walk in the searching light of God; it is dependent upon our individual walk. (3) A warning—"If we say . . ." (v. 6). If we say one thing and do another, there is no fellowship. (4) The purpose and value of our fellowship—the expression of the fulness of Christ in the whole Body. It is all of Christ. The ultimate goal of our fellowship is the great eternal purpose; the end that our joy may be full.

Brother H. W. Nelson (of Minneapolis, U.S.A.) said that his presence amongst us was to him an indication that the Lord was answering prayer that new and fuller meaning might be given to this present year.

Turning us to Psalm cxxxiii, our brother pointed out three essential factors in the Psalm: -

- (1) The place of Oneness is the place of Anointing.
- (2) The place of Oneness is the place of Ascendency.
- (3) The place of Oneness is the place of Appointment.

If we are to exist in the end hours of this age it will have to be together.

Brother Stephen Kaung brought warm greetings not only from New York, U.S.A., but also from the Lord's children in the Far East. A real burden for the Lord's interests in the United States was also urged upon us, for whilst evidences are not lacking that the Lord has been working towards something of and for Himself, there is still a great need for the outworking of His fullest purpose.

We are approaching, said our brother, a great day; great in the sense that what God is after is going to be accomplished. The Lord Jesus is now preparing a Bride, and we are rapidly approaching the day when He will present her to Himself. The Lord in these days is bringing His people together. He is bringing East and West into a deeper understanding of one another. In His redemption, the Lord has delivered us from *all* our racial differences. The Lord is purifying His Church; whatever can be shaken is being shaken. He is doing this because the great day is quickly approaching. We are not *attempting* something *for* the Lord—we are *in* something *of* the Lord.

Brother John Paul (of Ranchi) brought the final word of this second gathering. After reinforcing the greetings already brought by Brother Bissell, our brother turned our thoughts to Ephesians i. 1-6.

THE BODY OF CHRIST. The Body of Christ is that body of men and women who are in vital relationship with the risen Lord in the power of spiritual life. It is not something national, or international; it is something heavenly—a *new* creation (II Cor. v. 16). We can find the spiritual Body of Christ wherever He is given His place as Head. You cannot have the Body of Christ *without* the Head. God is ever seeking to have this reality in expression. Without the reality of Christ Himself, even *New Testament truth* will not work. We are

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

not the whole Body, we are a part. The binding factor of the Body of Christ is given as being sevenfold: "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all . . ." (Eph. iv. 4-6). The bond of our unity is the Lord Himself. The purpose behind the Body of Christ is the expression of the Head. God desires to display His Son, not to hide Him. But it can only be through the Body.

The Lord's Day morning.

As the first occupation, a large company of the Lord's children were gathered around Him at His table, both to worship and to bear testimony to Him as being the only source of our life. A deep sense of the Lord's presence filled our hearts and the worship of the assembled company was voiced representatively and gathered up to be laid at His feet.

Following the testimony of the Lord's Table we were again led by our brother, *Mr. Sparks*, to the Letter to the Hebrews, and our thoughts centred upon the first two verses of Chapter i.

We may think we know this letter, but its magnitude has not been comprehended. It is a far greater document than any has realised. Far-reaching and comprehensive, it gathers up the spiritual meaning of at least 4,000 years in the Old Testament. It goes behind all history, earthly events, and systems, and gathers them up into one inclusive issue—the inheritance of God's Son. It resolves all the problems that have troubled the human heart and mind.

The problem of man's being and destiny? The answer is Jesus Christ. The problem of sin? This letter essays to solve this problem—it is all answered and settled in the Person of Jesus Christ. The mystery of suffering?—it is answered in 'Hebrews' in the Person of Jesus Christ. There is triumph over it in Him! The strange and hard way of the life of believers, its problems, perplexities and mysteries—the letter gives the answer as in Jesus Christ.

It is helpful to stand back from any Scripture and ask: Why did the writer write that? What was in his mind? Here the answer is obvious. He had the intention to set forth the infinite greatness of Jesus Christ, and in so doing to convey what a great inheritance believers have in Him. The greatness of the gift is seen in the greatness of the Giver. All the lives of the Old Testament, loose ends in themselves, converge upon, and are brought together and ended in, the Lord Jesus.

The letter begins with an inclusive movement—the presentation of the SON. What a need there is for a larger apprehension and appreciation of our Lord! For many of us—to our shame—He is too small for our problems, our sins, our difficulties.

(1) He is *God's Son*. All that follows, all the inheritance, comes out of the fact that it is provided by God's Son. In times past it was a matter of servants and angels, but they stopped short. Then God said: "I will send my beloved son . . ." (Luke xx. 13). The Son has done what all the servants together could not do.

(2) "*Heir of all things*". The Son secures all that God ever purposed. In our reading at the Table (I Kings viii. 1-11) we saw the Ark of the Covenant finally at rest in the Sanctuary with the staves withdrawn (v. 8, mg.). There is no more question of destination—the Ark has arrived. God has reached His end; His Son *shall have* all things.

(3) *The Full and Final speech of God*. "God . . . hath *at the end* . . . spoken . . ." There is nothing beyond. It is not merely what Jesus *said*, but what the Son *is* in Himself. *What Christ is*, is God's final speech. Hearing the Son is more than hearing what He said. We can hear His utterances without hearing *Him* (John viii. 43).

(4) *The Instrument and Pattern of all creation*. The ages were made through Him. By His Son God created all things; He made the Son the pattern of all things. If we could read the whole creation with spiritual eyes, we should see Christ in everything. When eventually redeemed, the whole creation will be filled with Christ.

(5) *The impress and revelation of Very God*. Christ is the essence of God's being. How far beyond us is this!

(6) *He upholds all things by the Word of His power*. Our Jesus Christ does this! "In him all things hold together" (Col. i. 17). He is the Integrator of all things "by the word of his power".

(7) This One has "*made purification for sins*". If such a One has done it, surely that is a ground of confidence. That gives a new, mighty meaning to our salvation. What all the lesser ones *failed* to do, God, in the person of His Son, tackled, and *made purification for sins*—"so great salvation."

(8) *He is the One who has reached the end of God's road for man*. He has reached the end of the road to ultimate perfection. Adam was not perfect, but was capable of being perfected. He was on the road, but turned back. Later men had failed to reach perfection: "These *all* died in faith . . . not . . . made perfect" (Heb. xi. 13, 40). This

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

One has reached the end—"made perfect". He has reached the end—perfection, fulness—as Representative. He was tested to breaking point, but was ministered to by angels. So it is with us in a lesser way. Thus He became the "Author of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 9), "having obtained eternal redemption" (ix. 12). He is the Guarantee that God will do it in us; the Security for faith. He can get us there!

We need a new apprehension of how great Christ is; otherwise our faith will not survive. In this letter all is headed up to faith. In this marvellous presentation, by the Holy Spirit, of the Son of God, who went this way of faith, the foundation for faith is laid.

The Lord's Day afternoon.

Brother John Paul brought to us the word in the second session of the day. The Scripture read was: Colossians iii. 1 - 17, and the basis of the meditation was "Christ in you" (Col. i. 24) and "Christ our life" (iii. 1).

Whatever God accomplishes will be in the life of His Son. He is the Alpha and the Omega. God begins, continues and finishes in His Son. The first thing is Christ indwelling. God does not work from the outside but from the inside. In the Old Testament dispensation He could not get inside man; but He was waiting for the time when He could do so. During the days of His flesh, the Lord Jesus could not get inside His disciples. But now there is a new dispensation—that of the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Everything is now from within. Wherever Christ is, there is life; there is no room for death.

If Christ is in us, He will produce a certain kind of life. What kind of life will the indwelling Christ produce?

(1) **Spiritual Life** (life inwardly). All human effort to produce moral life ends in failure, e.g. the Children of Israel. After 1500 years they were not able to be justified. Everything depends upon the inward life for outward expression.

Spiritual life is the *real* life. In II Corinthians iv. 18 we are shown the permanent nature of spiritual life and of the things unseen. What is the spiritual life? John's writings—especially his Gospel and the Book of the Revelation—will tell us.

John's Gospel is full of the greatness of the Lord: "I am the bread of life"; "I am the light of the world"; "I am the door" . . . into all that God has. The Gospel of John gives us the Lord's own words, deeds, claims, and so on, without com-

ments. Spiritual life is a progressive seeing and knowing of the Lord in an inward way.

In 'Ephesians', in the first three chapters we have Paul's inward, spiritual knowledge; in the last three, we have the outworking in moral life.

In 'Hebrews', in the first chapter we have the magnitude of the Lord; in the second chapter, the comparison between the first Adam and the last; in the third, the comparison between Moses and Christ; in the fourth, Joshua and Christ; in the fifth and seventh, Aaron and Christ.

The test of our spiritual life is how much we know the Lord by the Holy Spirit.

The book of the Revelation is the unveiling of the Christ. John saw everything "in the Spirit". He was in an altogether different realm—the heavenly realm, and he says, again and again, "I saw . . . I saw . . . I saw . . ."

(2) **Moral Life** (life in expression). The spiritual life produces the moral life.

In his First Epistle, John's emphasis is on the evidencing in an outward way of the indwelling Christ. The key-word is LOVE—"Love one another" (iv. 11, 23).

"Your life is *hid* . . ." (Col. iii. 3): that is the spiritual life.

"Put on therefore . . . compassion, kindness, longsuffering; forbearing . . . forgiving . . . above all . . . love . . ." (Col. iii. 12 - 14). This is the outward, moral life.

The Lord's Day evening.

Brother Stephen Kaung, after reading from II Corinthians xii. 2 - 10; i. 8 - 11; iv. 7 - 12; drew a comparison between that letter and 'Ephesians'.

In 'Ephesians' the highest doctrine is touched; in II Corinthians, the highest living; in 'Ephesians' we have the mystery of God in Christ Jesus; in II Corinthians, what God can do with us, the clay. We need both: 'Ephesians' to reveal the mind of God; II Corinthians to show what God can do in such "earthen vessels".

"A MAN IN CHRIST". Paul describes him in an objective way. II Corinthians is full of Paul—the man. He tells us of his sufferings, his tribulations, his experiences, his reactions, his love. As you read, you find it is Paul—and yet not Paul; you see the love of Christ, His passion, His grace. This "man in Christ" is a mystery. He is 100% man, a human being; he feels hurt; he wants understanding and sympathy; yet he is above and beyond everything. You think you know him—and then you think you do not know him.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Mary at the tomb thought the Lord was the gardener. He spoke, and she knew Him. The two disciples on the Emmaus road talked with Him, and their hearts burned within them; yet they did not know Him. Then He broke the bread, and their eyes were opened. Peter and the other disciples on the lake did not recognise Him: He commanded, they drew the net full of fishes, and then they knew Him. We think we know Him, and yet we do not know Him; we think we do not know Him, and yet we know Him.

A Christian is like that—a mysterious person. The world does not know him, because it does not know the Christ. In these days the world knows us too much; we have lost our position of “a man in Christ”. This is the man that God is looking for to-day: a man as mysterious as Christ is.

God is looking for a *man*, not for an angel, not for a spirit. We think that to be spiritual is to be not human; to be deprived of all feeling, thinking, volition. God does not want an angel; He wants a 100% man. There is much in man that God does not want, but He still wants man. God desires to take the natural out of the human, and make it supernatural. Man became natural, and that has to go, has to give place to the supernatural.

The Gospels give a picture of a *perfect Man*. Christ is so human! Here is humanity without the fallen nature. He is a puzzle to all who meet Him. The boy, the man—they know Him; yet they do not know Him. God wants man like that—“a man in Christ”. Man alone is horrible to look at. God does not want you as you, or me as me; we are marred vessels: He wants “a man in Christ”. How can we be that? It is all of mercy!

At the beginning of this second letter to the Corinthians, we have the secret: ‘the treasure in the earthen vessel’. The difficulty with us is not with the treasure; it is that we put so much confidence in the vessel, that we imprison the treasure. The ‘surpassing greatness of the power’ is within us, but we ‘trust in ourselves’ so much, that we do not give Him a chance to work.

The deliverance does not come by merely knowing about the fact of this power, but by processes in the hands of the Holy Spirit. God arranges sufferings, trials, for one purpose: namely, that we should be delivered from self-confidence, to trust in ‘God who raises the dead’.

There is a sentence of death upon our flesh, our natural man. That sentence was passed two thousand years ago, upon the Cross, yet we do not accept that death-sentence. It is hard for us to be brought to an end. It is only when we accept the sentence of death upon ourselves that we can ‘trust

in God’. God only begins when we are *thoroughly dead*, as we see in the raising of Lazarus. *Resurrection never begins until death is certain.*

The very purpose of pressure, trials, suffering, is that we may be brought, in an experimental way, to an end of ourselves, that the grace of God may raise us up in the resurrection-life of Christ.

We are the clay. God does not throw the clay away, but He works on it. The precious stones of the New Jerusalem were once the clay of the earth, but are now transformed. Our individuality will remain, but our personality will be changed. The only way that God can clear the natural out of the human is through the Cross: by heat and pressure and darkness, as in the case of the precious stones. God is after something precious, that He may be able to present it to His Son.

On Monday, larger companies than ever before gathered to the last day of the feast. The overflow was accommodated in the upper hall, to which the messages were relayed.

Monday morning.

Mr. Sparks, continuing in the letter to the Hebrews, gathered our thoughts around the opening word of the epistle, “God . . .”

(1) God’s purpose of self-expression.

In the whole of the unveiling contained in the Bible, in relation to the momentous movements therein, everything is shown to have its source in God: Genesis i. 1—Creation: John i. 1—Incarnation: Hebrews i. 1.—Unfolding and Unveiling.

Everything must be viewed from God’s standpoint: what He meant, purposed, intended: what was in His mind. The Bible is an unveiling, an unfolding of what was in God’s mind in the beginning.

‘Hebrews’ uncovers the spiritual background up to Christ: what lay behind the ways and means of God through the centuries; the spiritual meaning, the spiritual interpretation. But it also shows that all that spiritual meaning constitutes the inheritance of a people in this dispensation.

In the first sentences particularly, and then on to the end of the second chapter, there is disclosed God’s desire to express Himself. God’s purpose was to come out from hiddenness, from remoteness, to show Himself in the works of His hands, in a creation with man at its centre; a creation in which He would be revealed. It was to be an express image of Him in concrete form; in the first place, of His character, of His essential nature. The whole Bible is the developing expression of what God is like in His nature, until you come to the

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

sum of all—"God is love" (I John iv, 16). When God reaches His end, His universe will be an expression of what He is in all His Divine capacity—His wisdom, understanding, knowledge: His power, energy, endurance: His unfailingness: His eternity. For this He created all things.

But God's character, His nature, His capacity in all these attributes, is spiritual. It is firstly something other than what we mean by these terms. God is *Spirit*, and everything of and out from Him is *spiritual*.

(2) The whole purpose taken up in and by God's Son.

In the expression of God and in the filling of all things, the Son is God's express image—that is, in His spiritual character. In God's Son there is a character that is different; there is a capacity, a wisdom, that defies all human attempts to explain. Christ always goes beyond man. This is seen in the case of the man *born* blind, and in Lazarus. Here it was not healing, not repairing, but creating.

Redemption is for man, but also for the earth, for the cosmos, for the universe, in order that God may express Himself therein. The end of all things is to be glorification. With Christ glorified, God has reached His end. The Son of Man at the right hand of God is the surety of the end.

(3) The purpose taken up in man.

'What is man, that thou hast him in mind?' (Ps. viii, 4). First it is 'man' in the plural, then man in the singular—The Man! To make sure that there shall be no second tragedy, that His purpose shall be realised, God elects a Body—an elect Body amongst men—chosen, foreordained, predestinated. This is God's human security. In 'Hebrews' we have the conclusiveness of Christ's work: the rest secured; the veil entered. In Him, all is secured and settled.

But then, with Him, there comes into view a family: "... I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii, 13). "Bringing *many sons* unto glory..." (ii, 10). God is taking no risks in the new creation. The purpose is made sure in the Representative in Heaven, and then in His elect vessel. Here is a great movement of God to express Himself in man. The bulk of 'Hebrews' is taken up with God's activities directed towards doing this in His people.

In all these things, God is after an expression of Himself. If it is otherwise, our 'churches', our 'fellowships', our 'societies', are without meaning, and without effect. God can do without anything if it ceases to fulfil this purpose—that of displaying the love and grace of God.

God is seeking character, in the first place. "My son, regard not lightly the *child-training* . . . For whom the Lord loveth he *child-traineth* . . ." (Heb. xii, 5, 6).

God is producing sons like *the Son*; sonship is an expression of the *Father's* character. Why is God taking this way of 'child-training'? His purpose is to bring us into *spiritual* wisdom and knowledge. Baffled and confounded in our own wisdom, we move into another kind of wisdom. There is an 'afterward' (xii, 11) in which we say: 'Was not the Lord wise in that!' This is why all our power and energy is sapped and drained and brought to weakness. It is in order that His strength, another kind of strength, may be perfected in our weakness. This is 'child-training'.

(4) The Process.

The process begins (a) with the Gospel, the Evangel. The evangelism of the New Testament is in the light of all this. It is not a question, firstly, of what we get in salvation, but of what God is to get.

And the process begins (b) in each one that responds to the call. We are brought into the school of 'child-training' with this end in view—conformity to the image of God's Son.

Monday afternoon.

Brother Bakht Singh (of Madras), brought the love and warm greetings of many of the Lord's children in the lands of India, Pakistan and Ceylon.

Our brother then went on to recount how the Lord had sovereignly laid hold on him in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1929, and had shortly afterwards laid upon him the burden of his own people in India. The history of the work in India over the years has been that of learning the sovereignty and sufficiency of God in all that He undertakes to do. In many places the Lord has been gathering great companies, and in convocations meeting His children in a living way. God is doing this without recourse to propaganda, advertising or other human agencies, and is, in His own way, meeting every need, both spiritual and material.

After telling of some remarkable interventions of the Lord in individual lives in answer to much prayer, our brother brought us to the message and solemn challenge of Acts xi, 19-26; xiii, 1-3.

Firstly, there is the ever-present peril of seeking to limit the activities of God to our own prescribed circle: "... speaking the word to none save only to Jews" (xi, 19). As here, if we begin to set boundaries to the Holy Spirit, He will reach out through other instruments to accomplish His purposes. Jerusalem, with its narrowed horizon,

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

gave place to Antioch; and from there, under the mighty hand of God, through Barnabas and Paul, and later through Paul alone, the Gospel went out into all Asia Minor, and thence into Europe. We need to keep our eyes turned out to a vast, needy world around.

Further, there is the need to keep in close touch with the Lord. The company of the Lord's people at Antioch were in constant prayer and in fasting. Illustrating this from present-day experience, our brother told of many instances when, faced with problem and difficulty, the Indian brethren had 'prayed through', sometimes for months, until the mind of the Lord was made known.

And finally, there is the necessity for submission to the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, limited in some, went beyond them and chose others who are unnamed. "... Some of them, men of Cyprus, and Cyrene, . . . spake unto the Greeks also . . ." (xi. 20). Later, after much prayer and fasting on the part of the believers, it was the Holy Spirit who said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (xiii. 2).

Thus, a very necessary emphasis was brought to us: that we must be ever outward to the need of the Lord in the world around us; and the necessity for brokenness and for recognition that the Holy Spirit is alone capable of accomplishing the purpose of God, now as ever.

Monday evening.

Brother Stephen Kaung, after reading Hebrews xi. 8 - 10, 14 - 16; Revelation xxi. 1 - 5, 10; went on to say:

We are all strangers and pilgrims on this earth, but there is something that God sets before our eyes, which gives us strength and endurance to go on. All the saints, of all ages, have been seeking for something. There is an assurance in our hearts, that the thing which we seek is what God is seeking. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were seeking a better, a heavenly city. God has been seeking this through all the ages. We, too, are seeking this city.

In 'Revelation', the New Jerusalem is seen as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. God has been preparing this through the ages. The day is coming when both God and we shall find the city. God is its Architect and Builder. It is His idea. He lays the plan, He gives the pattern, He sees to it that it is built according to His plan. It is a city prepared by God. In 'Revelation', the city descends out of Heaven prepared. Our mentality is that it ascends; but in fact it descends.

What is the city? It is the Bride of the Lamb. God's purpose is centred in His Son. He desires one who shall share with His Son, God, through the ages, has been preparing the city to be presented to His Son as His greatest gift. Why does God desire a city for His Son? Because He is so great that it needs a city, a numberless multitude, to be a counterpart to His Son. One person cannot make a city! It is a corporate body; not many scattered, isolated units, but many gathered into one.

This it is that God has put into our hearts to seek. A city is not just a mass of people within a certain boundary, it is a well-ordered unit. It is not enough just to have the mass, even out of every kindred and tongue and tribe. God gathers out and makes an organism—the New Jerusalem—an ordered city. John saw a new Heaven, and a new earth, and the New Jerusalem. Naturally, we would expect the Church to ascend up to Heaven. In Scripture it is always seen to be descending out of Heaven. The Church's roots are in Heaven, not in the earth. It works down from Heaven, not up to it. We make a Tower of Babel—no wonder we are confused!

The city that comes down out of Heaven has "the glory of God". In 'Ephesians' we read that Christ purifies the Church, that it may be a glorious Church. What is glory? Glory belongs to God. Glory does not belong to us. In us there is no glory, but only darkness, shame, 'spot' and 'wrinkle'. Whenever God is seen, you see glory. Glory is the outshining of God; the outgoing, the coming out of God; God being made known. When Christ came to this earth, and "dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth", ". . . we beheld his glory" (John i. 14).

There is a word to melt our hearts—GRACE! God is ready to give grace, but we are so unready to receive it. The effect of all our own expression is shame. When we have the sentence of death within ourselves; when we tell the Lord that we can do nothing; then grace lifts us up, and the result is glory.

The city has the glory of God, therefore it is of the grace that is there. When grace has finished its work, the city will be full of glory.

"Grace and truth." What is truth? It is not in us. There is nothing true in us. The whole world is under a lie. When Christ comes to the earth, He says: "I am the truth"—the only reality, the only abiding. There is nothing in us that will abide for ever; all that we have and are will pass away.

But He that sitteth on the Throne says, "I make all things new". "The former things are passed

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

away." How we hold on!—even to something we think is spiritual, to knowledge, experience, ministry—and dare not let it go. As we hold on, glory is not there. But when we are willing to let go, in order that Christ may be all, and in all—there is glory!

In the city everything is transparent. The gold, yes, the whole city, is transparent, clear as crystal. Why? Because there is nothing to hide; everything is real, eternal, abiding. It is Christ! It is glory!

This is the city which God has prepared for His Son; the city for which we are seeking. When we enter the city we shall find that we are a part of it. God is not only preparing the city; He is preparing us as a very part of it.

The way to glory, or glorification, is the Cross, the way of suffering. The Cross cuts away all that is shameful, dark, hidden. Faith is necessary, for it is God's work, not ours. The work of grace needs to be received by faith.

What is faith? It is seeing the unseen, and refusing to see that which is seen.

People to-day see too much, they cannot therefore see the unseen.

The whole of the ground floor was packed as we gathered again around the Lord, and around His Table. A deep, solemn sense of His brooding presence; a sense of joy, and yet a sense of challenge, filled our hearts, as we turned to remember that the way of all that comes to us in His loving kindness and tender mercy, is the way of His Cross.

The last note was one of joyful expectancy and hope:

'Saviour, long thy saints have waited—
Centuries have passed away . . .

'Surely I come quickly!
Amen, Lord Jesus, come!'

Death means separation, and life means union. By being brought more and more into sympathy with Christ's death unto sin, we become more and more thoroughly separated from its service and defilement. It is not merely separation from sinning, it is a separation from the old self-life. The great hindrance to the manifestation of the Christ-life is the presence and activity of the self-life. This needs to be terminated and set aside. Nothing but 'the putting to death of the Lord Jesus Christ' can accomplish this. Conformity to His death means a separation in heart and mind from the old source of activity and the motives and aims of the old life.

SELECTED

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

GO IN AND POSSESS!

THE scorching sun had glared down all day on the open Cauca Valley, making Palmira more like an oven than a town. Darkness had brought relief from its rays, but not from its heat, and still the night was hot and heavy. Mr. Johnson tossed to and fro on his bed, weary and yet unable to sleep, longing for the day and yet dreading the cares which it would bring. It was not the heat which was keeping him awake, but trouble of spirit.

His too active mind reviewed the past years, going over and over the story of his labours in the

Gospel. Years before he had come to Colombia with his family. The difficulties had been many. He lodged with another missionary family in Cali, the State capital, but his heart was set on starting a Gospel testimony in the town of Palmira, the next main station along the railway line. In the course of his Gospel journeys he often visited Palmira, finding there some people who were ready to listen to his message, but he and his family could never find a home there. Nobody dare rent him a house. He visited the town on and off, praying always for

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

an open door and asking everywhere about a place in which to live, but although there were many vacant houses the very name of 'Protestant' was so hated and feared that not a landlord in the town dared accept him as a tenant.

After eight years his prayer was answered. He found a man who was willing to brave the wrath of the priests and rent him a small house. It was a humble home, but it was enough for the family and had a suitable room for meetings. So the removal was made, and when the Johnsons took possession of their new home they felt as Joshua must have felt when the walls of Jericho fell flat—except that Joshua had not had to wait for eight years. But the miracle had happened. Their prayers were answered. They were in, and in to stay.

They certainly had stayed until now, and the Lord had blessed their testimony, but suddenly there had come the trouble which was keeping Mr. Johnson awake. That day he had received a month's notice to quit. The landlord's creditors had got legal possession and were forcing Mr. Johnson to leave. Was this to be the end of all their hopes? It seemed so. And still Mr. Johnson stirred restlessly on his bed, thinking and praying, and thinking again. There seemed no way out.

Then he remembered a strange gift which he had once received. He had helped a sick foreigner, a merchant, who on his deathbed had made him a present of the deeds of a piece of land. The words of the dying man had been: 'My father bought this land long ago. I don't know where it is. It is somewhere within the limits of this city, but I have never been able to find it. The deeds are old, but they are in order, and I give them to you. If you can find the land, you can have it.'

Mr. Johnson had studied the deeds, which were indeed old and not very clear. They only seemed to give certain measurements and the special landmark of three palm trees. In the course of the years he had often looked for and enquired after this piece of land, but in vain. No one could help him, and no place which he surveyed corresponded to the measurements. Now, in the night, it all came back to mind—but only to mock him, for here was he, a landowner and yet with nowhere to live. He prayed one more prayer before falling into an un-

easy doze: 'O Lord, please show me how to get possession of my property.'

The morning came. After breakfast he set out, deeds in hand, to see if he could find this plot. He crossed the road, went on a hundred yards, turned a corner and was walking on, when suddenly he saw three palm trees. He had often seen them—he must have done, for he passed that way frequently; but it was as though he had never seen them before, and as though something said: 'Those are the trees!' It seemed impossible. Still, there they were, three and no more, and the land was unoccupied and neglected. He hurried home to get a measure and set to work to check the size of the plot of ground. It was exactly as described in the document. This *was* his land, after all, and it was only just round the corner from where he had been living. He got busy with his claim, and, as no one disputed his rights, he was able soon to put up a hasty shack to cover his family and belongings, and to move in just when the month's notice expired.

It was a good-sized plot. Ultimately it provided room for a neat little chapel, as well as a training school for young workers. In the centre of it Mr. Johnson built himself a comfortable and airy bungalow, using lengths of the palm trees as pillars for his veranda. And there they are to this day.

"And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (Obadiah 17). That is just what Mr. Johnson did. The strange thing was that he had not done so before. He himself could never explain it. He could only be thankful that he had found it in the nick of time. His great need had made him pray, and answered prayer had led him to discover and claim what for so long had really been his.

How many boys and girls are passing by blessings which belong to them, without claiming what is really theirs, even though they have the title deeds in the Word of God. Every blessing is freely given to all who believe in Jesus Christ, but the owners need to claim their blessings. It may be a good thing for us all to pray Mr. Johnson's prayer: 'O Lord, please show me how to get possession of my property', and may the prayer be answered as quickly as his was.

H. F.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

V. THE GREAT TRANSITION

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah liii. 10, 11).

"But it is not as though the word of God hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children" (Romans ix. 6, 7).

"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians iii. 16).

AS we come to this further stage in the matter of the Divine seed, this fruit of Christ's travail, this new spiritual Israel, I want to make one or two preliminary remarks of a general nature.

GOD'S DEALINGS HAVE ONE BASIS

In the first place, it is necessary that we should be quite clear that, in the Bible, there are not two distinct things, as represented by the two Testaments, the Old and the New, or even more, if the Old Testament is subdivided into eras. There may be two, or more, methods of expression, but throughout the Bible, from its beginning to its close, there is only one thing expressed. Our habit of handling the Bible by dispensations, and emphasizing the different characteristics of different times, may have had the effect of making us mechanically minded, just as can a preoccupation with typology and symbolism. I want therefore to underline this anew: that, in these several and varied forms of expression, God is actuated, from beginning to end, by one thought, and one thought alone: *that everything throughout, at all times, shall express and be subservient to His Son.*

He governs everything, in the realities of His Person and of His redemptive and perfecting work. It is one Person and one Work, from the first book of the Bible to the last. The change from the Old Testament to the New is simply and only the change from the indirect to the direct; from the symbolic to that which is symbolized; from the temporal representation to the spiritual reality. That is all. It is not a change of purpose or object, not a change of basis or foundation; it represents no change of principle in any way.

Perhaps you feel you know all that; but there is very much more in it than any of us have yet realised. For example, all God's dealings with the patriarchs were, in principle, as much upon the basis of His Son as are His dealings with you and me. That was true also of Israel. Israel in the Old Testament was dealt with as much upon the basis of God's Son as we are in this dispensation. God has never, at any time, by any means, worked on any other ground than that of His Son. His creative activities were on the ground of His Son. 'In Him, through Him, by Him, unto Him, were all things created' (Col. i. 16); and from then everything has proceeded on that basis, and will be consummated in Christ. By whatever means, in whatever way God has worked, His ground has always been the same. And on into the ages to come, that ground will be unchanging. It is the ground of Christ. It is very important that we should remember this and be quite clear about it.

A TRANSITION

I want now to return to the point where I broke off in an earlier message in this series (see March issue, p. 44), when we had begun to refer to the Gospel by John, especially chapter iii. I was saying that we think we know something about John iii. Is it not the great chapter of: "Ye must be born again . . .", and of: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." Do we not know it? have we not heard it a hundred times, a thousand times? And yet, and yet . . . what do we know about it?

Now this part of the narrative, marked by chapters iii and iv, embraces all that could be said about this matter of the transition from the indirect to the direct; the transition from God's old method to His new method. It brings right into view the nature and principles of the heavenly seed, and much more. Let us look, then, at John chapter iii.

The chapter opens with these words: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews . . . Jesus . . . said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel . . .?" (John iii. 1, 10). "A man of the Pharisees", "of the Jews", "the teacher of Israel". Here you have in a person, an individual, the full embodiment, the full development, of Israel after the flesh: a Pharisee. I must push back the temptation to dwell upon details, for

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

half an hour could easily be spent on the history of the Pharisees, and that to great profit. Let us simply note that the sect of the Pharisees represented the very essence, the intrinsic meaning, of "Israel after the flesh" (I Cor. x. 18). They gathered into themselves all that Israel claimed to be or was supposed to be. If you met a Pharisee, you would meet the last word in Israelism and Judaism. This man Nicodemus was said to be "a ruler of the Jews", and then "the teacher of Israel". Note the form of the latter phrase, for the definite article is literally there in the text. Jesus did not say, 'Art thou a teacher of Israel?'; He said: "Art thou *the* teacher . . .?" This man evidently stood out; he was perhaps recognised above all others as the foremost teacher of that time in Israel.

I indicate these things in order to point out that here we have Israel present after the flesh in a very full way—*par excellence*. He is of the natural seed of Abraham, a full-grown son of Abraham after the flesh. Three things are main factors here: he was born after the flesh as a son of Abraham; he was circumcised in the flesh as the seal of the covenant made with Abraham; and his all-absorbing and consuming interest, as a true Israelite, was with the kingdom that was covenanted to Abraham's seed. All the natural seed of Abraham, with all its marks and features, is gathered into this chapter: It is not just Nicodemus—the nation of Israel is present. With this man, there are present in representation all the children of Abraham, "according to the flesh", from the time of the patriarch himself right on to this very hour. He is really a most significant figure. Much more could, of course, be said about him. But that is where the matter is introduced.

Now the Lord Jesus, with a wave of the hand, repudiates the whole thing. He is not listening to it, not opening the door to it, not giving it a moment's consideration or attention. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you: You must be born again'. 'Really to be the seed of Abraham, you must be born from above'—for the phrase can bear that meaning also. The true seed of Abraham, to whom are the covenant and the promises and the prospect and the kingdom, is that which is born from above; not this at all.

TWO GREAT CONTRASTS

(a) TWO BIRTHS

The Lord Jesus makes here, either by direct statement or by clear implication, some fundamental contrasts. Firstly, a contrast between two

births: "that which is born of the flesh"; "that which is born of the Spirit": that which is born of the earth and that which is born out from heaven. These belong to two kingdoms, two worlds, two régimes, and there is nothing in common between them. The door of the Spirit is closed to the "flesh", and the Lord Jesus is not discussing this matter at all. He is simply saying that the Kingdom of God is so different, so other, it belongs to such a different realm, that there is no getting into it except by way of an utterly new beginning out from heaven. And the rest of the New Testament is built upon that fundamental truth. All Paul's ministry is built upon that, I said earlier that that was the cause of all the trouble where Paul was concerned. It was a most drastic, devastating thing to confront Israel with a statement like that—'You are not Israel after all! You have not begun to see the real meaning of the Israel of God!' "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see . . ."

"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". Here is not only the natural birth contrasted with the spiritual birth: here is a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, the Red Sea and the pillar of cloud and fire, as symbolic representations, and the spiritual reality on the other. "Born of water"—yes, symbolically in the Red Sea. "Born of the Spirit"—yes, symbolically in the cloud. They "were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. x. 2). 'But, Nicodemus, you know all about that, or you think you do. I tell you, you have not begun to see the meaning of it. There is a difference between the symbolic and the spiritual, the typical and the real. Being born of water and of the Spirit has a far, far, deeper meaning than you have ever seen, or can see, Nicodemus.'

(b) TWO KINGDOMS

The second contrast related to the Kingdom. Of course Nicodemus had not mentioned the word. But let me remind you of the last words of the preceding chapter. "But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John ii. 24, 25). "Now there was a man . . .", and Jesus knew him and what was in him, ". . . a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus". Jesus knew that this man's one interest in life—no doubt an honest, sincere interest, indeed a passionate interest—was the Kingdom. That was, of course, the great hope of Israel. And the Lord Jesus, knowing the man's absorption in that king-

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

dom interest, made it perfectly clear that the kingdom about which Nicodemus was thinking was one thing, but that the Kingdom itself was quite another. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven, is quite another thing from the kingdom of Israel on the earth.

What is the conclusion that we are to draw from all this? Just this: that the historic was not the real—it did not conform to what the Lord meant by the ‘truth’. We find the same thing in His conversation with the woman of Samaria, in chapter iv, where the Lord Jesus brought in a clear contrast. “The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.” Here is coming a change, a transition, a passing over. “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John iv. 21, 23). With that statement, the Lord rules out a whole order and system, and brings in something altogether different. All that which was historic was not the real thing: to use His word, it was not the ‘true’. “This mountain . . . Jerusalem . . .”—yes, but it is not the true. This birth after Abraham—yes, but it is not the true. This hope of the Kingdom—yes, but it is not the true! This is very searching.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The fact is that everything had to be put on to the ground of Christ, and that could only be, and can only be at any time, through death and resurrection—in other words, new birth. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. xxi. 12). That is a symbolic statement. Why? Because Isaac is the embodiment, in type, of the principle of death and resurrection. Everything had to be put on to the basis of Christ in death and resurrection, and that was no less true in the Old Testament than in the New.

In connection with this, I was recently reading again the fascinating story of Joseph: the famine in the land, the coming of his brethren, and the subsequent removing of the whole family—Jacob and all his sons—seventy souls—from the land into Egypt. The whole story of Joseph is, I think, one of those things that holds you to the end once you start reading it. It is just full of overmastering interest. But I found myself brought up short with a question. The Lord had brought Abraham into the land and given it to him and to his seed, by covenant, as an everlasting possession. Then what is this? The whole seed, every soul of them, is vacating the land, leaving the land of covenant,

and moving into Egypt! Now, we know that the Lord had told Abraham that his seed should be in a foreign land in bondage for four hundred years, and should be ill-treated, and so on (Gen. xv. 13). The Lord said that it would be so, and here it is. But leave aside for the moment the fulfilment of the prophecy. Here is a strange thing: the whole family, to the last soul, is uprooted and evacuated from the very place of covenant and into *Egypt*. What is the meaning of this?

I think I see the answer. Look at the seed of Abraham in the land; just look at those sons of Jacob. What sort of people are these? Yes, they are the seed of Abraham after the flesh, the historic line—but look at them! The incident with Joseph alone is enough to betray what sort of people they are. And the whole story of those men, throughout, is not a very nice story, is it? Their behaviour, their disposition, is a poor showing up of the seed of Abraham. Do you think that God is going to allow that kind of person to follow through to His end? Not at all! He will bring them into Egypt and put them first of all upon the basis of the travail of Christ—the Cross—and then, when they are there, let the principle of the Cross deal with the self-life, the flesh, until they groan. But then, out of that travail, see the mighty energies of God bringing that seed out from Egypt.

The principle, you see, is this same great principle—that of travail unto a new birth through death and resurrection. God is putting them off the ground of nature on to the ground of Christ, and that can only be in death and resurrection. Unless they go through this ordeal, this terrible ordeal, they cannot inherit, they cannot come through to possess the land. God is true to His principles: God is true to His Son. God is not play-acting. He is not just making meaningless history. God is writing, in very purposeful history, the eternal laws of His Son in Person and Redemption.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CIRCUMCISION

Here I must put in a rather long parenthesis on the matter of circumcision, a matter fraught with the greatest significance. Let me turn you to a few passages.

“*And he gave him*” (that is, Abraham) “*the covenant of circumcision*” (Acts vii. 8).

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

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision: and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be in uncircumcision" (Romans iv. 9 - 11).

You almost hold your breath as you read the next:

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing" (I Corinthians vii. 19).

Imagine a Jew saying that! We shall come to that in a minute.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Galatians v. 6).

"For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Galatians vi. 15).

Finally, that tremendous statement and exposition in the letter to the Colossians:

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIRCUMCISION TO THE JEWS

Let us remind ourselves of the immense importance attached to circumcision by the Jews. It is something that could hold us for quite a time, and it would be well if the full force of it could come home to us. It was the very sign of their national oneness, of their national existence, of their belonging to the people of God. Anybody without that sign was altogether outside the pale of promise and covenant and hope. It was the door, for them, into everything of value: everything for them rested upon that. No one, for instance, would ever be allowed to partake of the feast of the Passover who did not bear that sign.

We can realise a little of what they placed upon it when we come into the New Testament and consider some of the events after the day of Pentecost. On the one side, think for a moment what it meant for the apostles themselves—Peter, James, John,

and the others—to have to deal with this matter and weaken their position regarding it. It was a real battle, for it meant uprooting something from their very being, something that was a part of them; and it was cropping up all the time. On the other side, there were the Judaizers—those men who pursued Paul over the face of the earth, tracking him down into every town and city, on this one issue. They followed him up and said to those to whom he had ministered: 'Unless you are circumcised, you cannot be saved' (Acts xv. 1). That is a positive statement, and this was the cause of all the trouble.

There is very much, both in the Scriptures and outside of the Scriptures, that shows what a great thing this was. Even to-day, the celebration of this in a Jewish home is preceded by festivities and sacred rites. Yes, there is for them something about this ordinance that is big, tremendous. It was rooted deep in their very being as a most sacred thing, upon which everything of ultimate value hung. And here is this man who comes along and says, 'Circumcision is nothing!' A Jew of the Jews, "of the stock of Israel", "circumcised the eighth day" (Phil. iii. 5), and he says it is nothing! What has Paul seen?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CIRCUMCISION

Well, of course, he has seen the spiritual significance; and when you see that, the other is nothing. In his letter to the Colossians (among other places), he lays down precisely and concisely what that significance is. Let us read the passage again.

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

Now there are two things here. First of all, we have God's full thought about circumcision and about baptism, and the relationship between the two. And then, secondly, we see what is the real significance of baptism in the life of the child of God.

CIRCUMCISION, LIKE BAPTISM, POINTS TO THE CROSS

The relationship between circumcision and baptism is here stated by Paul. In both these words

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

—"ye were . . . circumcised", "having been buried . . . in baptism"—we are brought right to the Cross of the Lord Jesus. In principle and meaning they are combined as one, and they point to the Cross. "Buried with him . . . raised with him". The whole thing is put on the basis of Christ crucified and risen. Of course, we who are Christians know that to be the meaning of baptism. But what was the meaning of this other sign? Perhaps we may put it like this: that the Cross is here brought in as—so to speak—the instrument of circumcision. It does that which must be done—it is the means of actually carrying it into effect—and it is drastic.

If Israel had only seen! If they had only seen, nothing would have been given away. They would not have had to lower their idea or lessen their estimate, they would not have made less of circumcision, if they had seen. For, after all, this *is* a big thing, it is a great thing. After all, national existence does rest upon it: but it is not this nation, it is the heavenly one. Entry into all the blessings of the covenant, the eternal covenant in His blood, rests upon the principle that is here. The whole Kingdom, as covenanted, is entered into and inherited by this door. Yes, it is a big thing. Nothing has been exaggerated as to its importance. If only they had seen Christ crucified and risen! It was only because they did not see the real meaning of this pre-eminent rite in their own life and history that they lost everything. They lost the Kingdom; they lost their place as a nation, in the purposes and counsels of God, for the time being at least; and all because they separated between a thing and its meaning. Now, in John iii we see the Lord Jesus taking up the meaning of things for Nicodemus. By nature, of course, he is blind, like the rest. But Nicodemus is of the circumcision—that is the point. He is a Jew indeed; he is a representative, in a very full way, of Israel after the flesh. And the Lord Jesus makes it quite clear to him that—so far as acceptance with God is concerned—he, as such, is ruled out.

Now, what is the meaning of all this? In the life of the true seed of Abraham—which is Christ's seed—what does it mean? It means simply this: that circumcision is, as Paul says, not a matter of the flesh, but of the heart (Rom. ii. 28, 29). It is a severance that has to take place right down in the inner man, deep down in the innermost being of the person; a radical, fundamental putting of two things apart. You will be able to follow through the implications of this more fully than it is possible for me to do here. There is an encircling of the blood which makes a separation, puts two things

apart, and for ever after witnesses to the severance that has taken place, declaring that those two things are no longer together: God has put them asunder. And how much of the New Testament comes in when you say that! That is the spiritual meaning of baptism. You cannot say all this to everyone who is going to be baptized—they would be frightened and run away!—but God means all this. And God does not let us off. If we really mean business, He does not let us off any of His meaning, even though at the beginning we may not see it all—and thank God we do not! But even so, it might be well if we knew a little more than we often do.

THE FLESH, OR SELF-PRINCIPLE

What is it that is severed in and by the Cross of the Lord Jesus? From what do you and I accept severance, when we come to the Cross of the Lord Jesus and, in the symbolic act of baptism, take our position with Him there? There are various terms for it in the New Testament. It is sometimes called 'the flesh'. Paul uses it here: "the body of the flesh" (Col. ii. 11). He is not talking about our physical body, our body of flesh. He is using that word 'flesh', as he often does, in a symbolic way. A definition that he gives to it in the Corinthian letter is 'the natural man'. Perhaps we think: Well, 'flesh' is a difficult word, but 'natural man' is still more difficult—it seems more technical. What do these terms really mean?

They mean, purely and simply: the *self-principle* in man. That is at the root of everything. That is where all the trouble began with Adam; that is where all the trouble has gone on; and that is where the trouble is with you and me. It is a protean monster that has awoken, stretched itself, risen up and taken hold of the heart of man. It will assert itself, make itself known and felt, in every conceivable and inconceivable way. We shall never be able to conceive of the unnumbered, unsuspected ways in which this monster will show itself. It is no use trying to track it down. Every hour, every minute, every second, almost, of our life, in some form or other, this many-headed, many-membered thing—the self-principle—will assert itself.

(a) IN THE MIND

It is found in the mind. It makes use of our intellect and our reason in order to overpower opposition and bring things our way, to argue and to substantiate our own position. And therefore, before you and I can ever get into the true realm of

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

heavenly things, we have got to have a 'circumcised' intellect, reason, mind. Is that not exactly what the Lord was saying to Nicodemus? Here is this teacher of Israel, coming to argue, to discuss, and the Lord says, 'It is no use. You may have been circumcised in the flesh as a good Jew, but what you need is to have your intellect circumcised'. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see . . ." 'You have got it all in the mind, all as an intellectual apprehension. If I have spoken of earthly things, and you do not understand them, where will you be if I begin to talk to you about heavenly things? Out of your depth altogether! Devout son of Abraham though you may be, you need to experience a radical severance between your natural mind and the things of Heaven.'

That is the trouble with many people. It is their head that is in the way all the time—the one thing that is obstructing their progress is their own head! Their stubborn-mindedness, or their clever-mindedness; their intellectual superiority, or their argumentative disposition: you meet it all the time—there is no way through. If you try to take them on that line you are simply beating your own head against a wall. The Lord Jesus never attempted such an approach in trying to win souls. He simply said: 'You must be born from above'.

(b) IN THE FEELINGS

In other cases the circumcision needs to take place in the realm of the feelings, the emotions, the desires. That is the part of the being that gets in the way of so many people. They are controlled entirely by the feeling-life, the affection-life—they are in bondage to that part of their being; and they are very difficult people to handle. But a true child of Heaven, the seed of His travail, is one in whom there has taken place, in that very realm of the feelings and desires, a deep work of circumcision.

(c) IN THE WILL

And what is true of the intellect and the emotions is true in the realm of the will. With many people it is their will that is in the way. They have got a position, and they tenaciously hold to it and support it; they have got a grip, and they just cannot let go. They will support their position with Scripture, or even with a 'revelation' superior to Scripture! Their will is the cause of all the trouble. The cause of the setting back of all God's purposes in their lives is just there: in their choices, their decisions, their position, their way; in their natural self-strength, that has never been

broken. And so it is just there that circumcision must take place.

It applies in so many other ways. The Cross, as the instrument of spiritual circumcision, has to be applied to this self-life deeper and ever more deeply, because there seems to be no end to it. But that is the painful side, the dark side. What is happening on the other side? Is it not that room is being made for Christ? The real seed, the seed of Christ, is growing, becoming more and more manifest. The opposite of the characteristics which we have been considering—strength of intellect or emotion or will—is meekness. He said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Pursue this right through, and you cannot fail to recognise that there was something radically different in the very depths of His being.

I have said that we cannot calculate the whole range of this self-principle, in its myriad forms of self-expression and self-occupation and self-attention and self-pity and self-consciousness and self-satisfaction. Even in our Christian life, in our devotion to the Lord, we are so happy that other people see how devoted we are, and how humble we are! And it is the self, the wretched—may I use the word?—the stinking self, coming up all the time. For a true child of God is oblivious of himself, has lost consciousness of himself in every way. If other people point out something good about them, they had not realised it, they were not aware of it. They are surprised that anyone could say anything good about them; they are not conscious of that. And on the other side, should people be critical and point out failings, well, they only say, 'Yes, I know: I had that out with the Lord', or 'I have got that before the Lord right now. I am not deceiving myself about that.' This is the true child of heaven.

So we could go on. That is the meaning of circumcision. In the light of that, the true meaning, the true principle, think of a Pharisee—a child of Abraham—saying: 'I am better than anyone else', or making long prayers for everybody to see and to hear! A child of Abraham! You remember all that the Lord said about them. Oh, they have missed the point! Ah, but do not let us criticize and blame. It is a very searching thing for ourselves, is it not? Paul says that circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but a new creation. True circumcision is not of the flesh, but of the heart. The Lord give us circumcised hearts, and give us grace to have this severance pursued to finality.

T. A-S.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1957.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during June and July, 1957.

Aalborg, Denmark £1 ; Amsterdam, Holland 10s.; Auckland, New Zealand £1 ; Balaffan Lochs £1 ; Balasore, India £1 ; Barry £1 ; Bexley 10s.; Bickley 5s.; Bietigheim, Germany 10s.; Birkenhead £1, 8s. 3d ; Blackpool 7s., £1 ; Blackrock £1 ; Boorhaman, Australia £5 ; Bridgwater £5 ; Bristol £1 ; Buckingham 6s.; Burnley 2s. 6d ; Canterbury £1 ; Cardiff 10s.; Cato Ridge, South Africa £3 9s. 3d ; Chirk 6s.; Compton Dando 10s.; Copenhagen, Denmark 11s.; Cowes £1 ; Crawley £1 ; Crowborough £2 2s. ; Dawlish 10s.; Deal 10s.; Drumadrochit 2s. 6d ; 5s.; Dublin 5s., £1 ; Dunning £1 ; East Corinth, Maine £2 ; East Dereham 10s., 10s.; Ede, Holland £1 ; Edinburgh 10s., £1, £2 10s.; Elderslie £4 ; Falmouth 10s.; Fontainemelon, Switzerland £3 4s. 11d ; Glasgow 10s., £1, £5 ; Guildford £2 ; Hastings 5s., 3s.; Heathfield 3s. 6d, 5s.; Hjørring, Denmark £1 ; Ilford 5s.; Ilkley 10s.; Jedburgh £2 ; Jersey £1 ; Joppa £1 ; Kaleden, Canada 9s., £1 17s. 8d ; Kirn £1 ; Lanehead 10s.; Larg £2 ; Lenham 13s. 5d ; Liverpool £5 ; Llanelly 10s.; London N.10—5s.; N.14—10s.; N.W.2—5s.; N.W.10—5s.; S.E.9—10s.; S.E.14—10s.; S.E.18—2s. 6d ; S.E.23—10s., £1, £1, £1, £1, £1, £3 7s. 6d ; S.E.24—5s.; S.W.2—10s.; W.C.1—10s., £1 ; Los Angeles, California £3 10s. 5d, 14s. 1d, £7 0 10d ; Macclesfield £1 1s.; Manchester 4s.; Newcastle-

on-Tyne £1 ; Old Stratford 5s.; Oslo, Norway £1 ; Portsmouth 6s.; Romford 10s.; Rotterdam, Holland £1 ; Schiers, Switzerland £1 ; Schwelm, Germany £1 ; Sevilla, Colombia £1 13s.; Shirley 10s., 12s.; Sibü, Sarawak £2 ; Smethwick 5s.; Southampton 6s.; Southbourne 10s.; Stoke-on-Trent 5s.; Sunbury-on-Thames 10s., 10s.; Tainan, Formosa 5s.; Toronto, Canada 18s. 9d, £2 ; Upper Gornal £1 ; Uttoxeter £1 ; Whitehaven £1 10s.; Woodlands 5s.; Worthing 5s., £5, £2 ; Yarmouth, Canada £2 ; York 5s. Total £134 7s. 1d

Birmingham, Ala. \$6, \$10, \$25 ; Ceará, Brazil \$5 ; Chicago, Ill. \$10 ; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$4.10 ; Detroit, Mich. \$10 ; Flagstaff, Ariz. \$25 ; Hastings, Minn. \$1 ; Indianapolis, Ind. \$3 ; Jacksonville, Fla. \$15 ; Laguna Beach, Calif. \$5 ; Nashville, Tenn. \$5 ; New Rochelle, N.Y. \$20 ; Norfolk, Va. \$1 ; Pasadena, Calif. \$1 ; Portland, Ore. \$2 ; Ragland, Ala. \$15 ; Rockfield, Ky. \$5 ; Rockville Center, N.Y. \$20 ; Warrensburg, Mo. \$1 ; Warrenville, Ill. \$5 ; Winnetka, Ill. \$10 Total \$204.10
Calgary, Alta, C.\$20. ; Kitchener, Ont, C.\$1.75
Total C.\$21.75

Rotterdam, Holland Gld. 10.00
Hanamakonda, A.P. Rs. 18.00 ; Ootacamund, Nilgiri Dt. Rs. 5.00 ; Vellore, Madras State Rs.25.00 Total Rs. 48.00
Schlieren, Switzerland Sw. Frs. 20.00 ; Zürich, Sw. Frs. 10.00 Total Sw. Frs. 30.00

THE NEXT
SPECIAL GATHERINGS
at HONOR OAK

will be held, the Lord willing, on

SATURDAY, October 5, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.
LORD'S DAY, Oct. 6, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

A NEW PUBLICATION

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

By T. A-S.

Price: 6/- (post. 6d). In U.S.A. \$1.28 (post. 5 cts.).

Printed at the Witness and Testimony Press, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E. 23.

**Austin-Sparks.Net - AWAT Volume 35 - Shareable
WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE**

By T.A-S.

BY HIS REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY	5/6 (\$1.18)
WHAT IS MAN?	5/- (\$1.07)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL I)	2/6 (\$0.53)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards) (Art paper covers)	4/6 (\$0.96) 3/6 (\$0.75)
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION	2/6 (\$0.53)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS	1/- (\$0.21)
GOD HATH SPOKEN	1/- (\$0.21)
IN CHRIST	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL	3d (\$0.05)
VISION AND VOCATION	2d (\$0.04)
SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
UNION WITH CHRIST IN CONSECRATION	2d (\$0.04)
THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN LIFE	2d (\$0.04)
THE MEASURE OF CHRIST	2d (\$0.04)
THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD	2d (\$0.04)
THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS	2d (\$0.04)
THE SERVICE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
ON KNOWING THE LORD	2d (\$0.04)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN	2d (\$0.04)
ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE	2d (\$0.04)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST (<i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i>)	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF	1d (\$0.02)
WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?	3d (\$0.05)
	2/6 a dozen (\$0.53)
THE GOD OF THE AMEN	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD (<i>For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated</i>)	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (<i>For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated</i>)	5/- (\$1.07)

By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
STANDING WITH THEM	1d (\$0.02)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

READY FOR THE KING (<i>For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated</i>)	1/6d (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH (<i>For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated</i>)	2/- (\$0.43)

By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE (<i>The Way of Salvation</i>)	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST	9d (\$0.16)

By W.N.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE	3d (\$0.05)
WASTE!	2d (\$0.04)

By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF	2d (\$0.04)
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (CONSECRATION)	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

THIS MINISTRY

(*Series of Messages given at Honor Oak*)

Volume II	9d (\$0.16)
Volume III.	1/- (\$0.21)

POSTAGE AND PACKING. For postage and packing please add the following to the total amount of the books ordered :

	In the United Kingdom.	Elsewhere (except U.S.A. & Canada)
Single copies of booklets price 4d and under	2d	1½d
Single copies of booklets price 6d to 9d	4d	2d
Single copies of booklets price 1/- to 1/6	6d	3d
<i>Otherwise:—</i>		
Orders totalling less than 5/- please add	4d in the shilling	2d in the shilling
Orders totalling between 5/- and £2 please add	2d in the shilling	1d in the shilling
Orders totalling more than £2 please add	2/- in the £	1/- in the £

In U.S.A. and Canada.

Single copies of booklets price \$0.30 and under please add 2 cents. Otherwise please add 4 cents in the dollar.

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to THE EDITOR, A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY, 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23.

Literature may be obtained from:—In U.S.A.—Almquist Christian Book Nook, 330, Division Street, Northfield, Minnesota or Westmoreland Avenue Chapel, 1505, South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles 6, California.—In India—Dr. A. I. Kinnear, 6, Brunton Road, Bangalore 1, or from Evangelical Literature Service (Mr. Donald J. David), 1/38, Vepey High Road, Madras 3.

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone: FORest Hill 4609.

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

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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



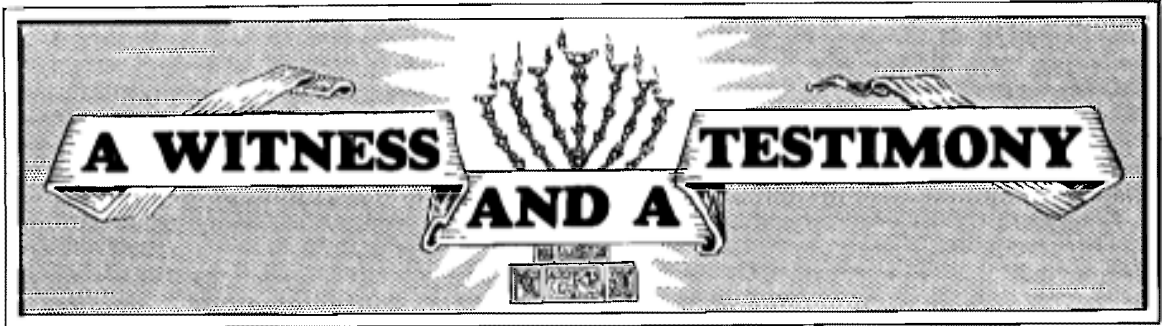
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1957.

Vol. 35. No. 6.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	121	THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S	
THE ISRAEL OF GOD (VI)	123	COMING AND PRESENCE	135
THE TESTIMONY OF RESURRECTION	128	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	139
THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH, AND		JESUS I KNOW, AND PAUL I KNOW,	
THE NATIONS (I)	132	BUT WHO ARE YE?	140

EDITORIAL

THE RELEASE OF THE LORD

(continued)

IN any consideration of the effectiveness of the Church's witness in the world in its early days, it is essential that careful note be taken of the governing factors which then obtained. That there were certain great governing concepts in New Testament evangelism is undeniable. We therefore essay to bring some of these into clear relief. That to which we would give primary place is—

THE POWER OF THE NAME

In the book which gives us the record of those first decades of Christianity, we might almost say that—apart from the Holy Spirit Himself—the paramount place is given to *the Name of Jesus*. In almost His last words to His disciples before returning to Heaven, the Lord had said: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer . . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached IN HIS NAME unto all the nations . . ." (Luke xxiv. 47). On the Day of Pentecost Peter cried: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of

you IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ . . ." (Acts ii. 38). In healing the lame man, he said: "IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (iii. 6). To the crowd that ran to see the miracle, he said that it had been "by faith IN HIS NAME" (iii. 16). To the High Priest, he declared that the man was healed "IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ . . . whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead . . ." (iv. 10). The Council commanded that they should "speak henceforth to no man IN THIS NAME" (iv. 17). In the face of threats and commands the Church prayed that "signs and wonders might be done THROUGH THE NAME of Jesus" (iv. 30). "We straitly charged you not to teach IN THIS NAME", said the High Priest, but they rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour FOR THE NAME" (v. 28, 41). So it goes on and on. The Name is the power and passion throughout.

But it is more than a title or designation. It is the *content* of the Name. What was it, and is it, that is contained in the Name?

Firstly, the Name embodies—

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

I. THE VICTORY OF A NATURE

In Philippians ii. 9, we are told that Jesus, as a reward for His condescension, humiliation, and obedience unto death, was given "the name which is above every name". This represented among other things the triumph of an unsullied and unblemished nature. Sinless, He carried His robes of character through every 'temptation common to man' (I Cor. x. 13), and "offered himself without spot unto God" (Heb. ix. 14). The world, evil men and the powers of darkness combined to corrupt or entrap Him and blemish His character, but, even when 'He who knew no sin was made sin for us' (II Cor. v. 21) and "bare our sins in his body upon the tree" (I Peter ii. 24), His own spirit remained unbending and undefiled. This victory cut the ground from under the feet of the evil powers. 'The prince of this world came and had nothing' in Him (John xiv. 30). The Name is the embodiment of tried and proved holiness: hence it is the ground and instrument of victory for the sinner over sin, and for the believer over Satan and the evil powers.

II. THE VICTORY OF MEEKNESS

This is a feature that is made much of in the Scriptures. It is that which lies within the so-often-used symbol of *The Lamb*. The essence of meekness is selflessness. Unresisting, unassuming disinterestedness and teachableness; these are its marks. In its spiritual power and moral values, meekness is the most far-reaching virtue of all. The ruin of creation and man; the distance and discord between man and God; the rift in the universe, and the bitter and terrible entail of sin and death, with all the sorrow and suffering of a disrupted order: all this is due to that satanic pride which led its aspirant to set his throne "above the stars of God", to be "like the Most High" (Is. xiv. 13, 14); and, on being hurled from his high place, to conspire to wreck God's work and to dishonour His name. The One who would undertake the immense task of undoing and rectifying this damage and vindicating that Name must Himself be without the slightest trace of the evil thing—pride; He must, indeed, be the very personification of its opposite. No ground suitable to Satan's victory must be found in Him, for Satan cannot cast out Satan (Mark iii. 23). That little phrase, "he humbled himself" (Phil. ii. 8), speaks of one of the mightiest and most potent forces in God's moral and spiritual universe.

The Name, then, represents all that Satan-undoing virtue; hence its potency when used in the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. THE VICTORY OF LOVE

This universe is shot through and through with hate. From that primal hatred of God mentioned above, the work of the evil powers is ever to turn man against God, and to make man—as God's chief creation—destroy himself by mistrust, suspicion, fear, jealousy, rivalry, sin, and a thousand other ways. Into such a world, there came One who should declare and demonstrate the love of God, and inculcate His love in a new creation: it was the inbreathing of the Spirit of love; the planting of the Vine, the fruit of which is love. You will find that the New Testament, when you trace this matter of love through it, is just the Testament of Love. The Cross of Christ is where all the hate in the universe—human and satanic—converged and overflowed, and where all the love of God met and defeated it. That victory is embodied in the Name. No one can hate another and bear the name of Christ.

How much more is gathered into the Name! The power of truth; the victory of faith; and so much more. It is indeed a mighty Name, in Heaven and earth, and hell. The Holy Spirit knows all its meaning, nature, and content; and when He came to vindicate and glorify that Name, and the Church lived and worked under His anointing, 'mighty things' happened IN THE NAME.

The recovery of faith in the Name, with a new appreciation of its significance and a return to its ground, would prove that it is no less potent now than it was then. But there must be an all-dominating passion for its honour—a single-minded jealousy that will govern all things with the one consideration: Is this glorifying to the NAME OF JESUS?

So the Name is not merely a formula to be appended to our prayers or professions. It is a power; but its potency demands that everything correspond to and be governed by the Spirit and character of its Divine Bearer. We may take the Name upon our lips, but, as happened with the seven sons of Sceva (Acts xix. 14), the evil powers may turn and rend us because they do not recognise the person: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" The Name must be taken and used in the power of the Spirit, and that power is only found where Jesus is truly present in unoffended good pleasure.

EDITOR

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

THE ISRAEL OF GOD

VI. APPRENTICESHIP FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark iii. 13, 14).

THE thought of 'apprenticeship' is, of course, something included and implied in the words 'disciple' and 'discipleship'. "He appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth . . ." You will notice the very precise terms in which this statement was made. This choosing of the twelve was a quite deliberate, calculated, considered, far-reaching and significant act. At another time the Lord Jesus said: "I know whom I have chosen" (John xiii. 18). And again: "Did not I choose you the twelve?" (John vi. 70). From Luke's account (Luke vi. 12, 13) we know that His choice followed a night spent alone with His Father in prayer. Yes, it was a very deliberate act, prayed over and considered, with a very large background in His own mind; it was far from casual. These are not just independent comments upon it or statements about it: they are supported by, and are indeed the very teaching of, the Scriptures. We shall see that as we go on.

"And he chose . . . twelve" (Luke vi. 13). What a dangerous thing for Him to do! But what a significant thing for Him to do! That number was a well-understood number in Israel. Were there not twelve Patriarchs? Were there not twelve Tribes? Twelve is one of the great, dominant numbers of the Bible, particularly in relation to Israel. Now that is deliberately laid hold of by the Lord Jesus, and brought over as the very beginning of the movement into the new dispensation; and so we have the twelve Apostles. And in many other ways that number comes into view, both in itself and in its multiples, in relation first of all to Israel. In the new Jerusalem, at the end of the Revelation (Rev. xxi. 10 - xxii. 5), we have twelve foundations to the walls. The city itself is 12,000 furlongs in each direction. It has twelve gates of twelve pearls. There are twelve angels. In the seventh chapter of the same book the number of the sealed is a multiple of twelve: 144,000—twelve times twelve thousand. And so we could go on.

Are you beginning to see something more in this deliberate act of the Lord Jesus? I say, it was not casual. He knew what He was doing. When He did

this, He was doing, in one sense, the most dangerous thing that He could do. For of course all the nation of Israel, and especially their rulers, would jump to but one conclusion from this that He was doing. In their minds there would at once arise the thought: 'Oh, he is setting up another Israel, is he? I see!' *And so He was!* That is just the point. With Him, the Israel that has been is set aside and repudiated. With Him another is brought in. To the twelve He said: 'You shall sit upon twelve thrones' (Matt. xix. 28). Now this number, twelve, in Bible symbolism, as you probably know, is the number of government, of administration. Israel knew that, and so, of course, immediately grasped the implication of choosing twelve. 'He is setting up a new government, a new administration!' Yes, He was!—but a very different one, as we shall see.

Twelve is the number of government. Consider its factors—three and four. Three is always the number of heavenly government, Divine fulness of government, the very Godhead over all. Four is clearly the number of earthly government: earthly conditions are characterized by the number four. North, South, East and West comprehend the earth; Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter comprehend the seasons; and so we could go on. Heavenly and earthly government are embodied in this number twelve. And that is very significant as to this act of the Lord Jesus. We recall that, when the covenant was made to Abraham, he was told that his seed should be as the sand on the seashore, as the stars of the heaven (Gen. xxii. 17). But now we call back the words of Paul: "To Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16). Heavenly and earthly government meet in Christ.

The choice of twelve, then, brought into view, first of all the new Israel, and then the new government by that Israel of heaven and earth; and that new Israel is the Church, as represented by the twelve. But this Israel, we repeat once more, is something very different from the old. It is a spiritual posterity, the fruit of His travail, the seed that He should see because of it (Isaiah liii. 10, 11). It is spiritual, as being a people who inherit, take over, the real spiritual meaning of that nation that was called 'Israel'—'prince with God' (Gen. xxxii. 28). There, inherent already in the very name, is the governmental element.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Now, of the "Israel after the flesh" many things were said, as to their pre-eminence, being the head of the nations, "the head, and not the tail" (Deut. xxviii. 13), and so on. As we know, they failed in this. But God's principles do not go when His instruments fail. When anything which God chooses, in order to express His principles, fails to do so, He does not abandon the principles. He may have to abandon the vessel or the instrument, but He will go on with His principles. And so it is in this case: the principle is taken over, and the fulfilment of this conception—a prince with God, the head and not the tail, the head of the nations—is found in the new Israel.

That, then, is the setting. Let us get closer to it. It has two major aspects: firstly, the essential nature of this Israel, and then the essential apprenticeship unto the Kingdom.

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE ISRAEL OF GOD

We have said that this seed of Christ is spiritual in constitution. We spent some time on that, as seen in John iii, in our last meditation, but let us just touch on it again. In the Israel after the flesh, you have an actual people on this earth whom you can recognise. You can see that they are—physically and in other ways—a nation, a people. Now, however physical features may manifest themselves in us, the constitution of the new Israel is not a physical constitution, a constitution of physical features: it is essentially a spiritual constitution. That is, it has in the first place nothing to do with anything outward at all. It has to do with *character*. This Israel is constituted on the basis of another character, and that character is Christ. Its very constitution is Christ.

A NEW KNOWLEDGE

It is a nature constituted, in the first place, with a faculty for *knowledge* which is altogether outside of the reach and range of any other kind of person. Here again we come back to John iii. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see . . . Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom . . ." This thing is beyond him in sight, in knowledge, in understanding, to say nothing of inheritance. This Israel is an Israel that has a seeing capacity which the old had not and no other has. It is constituted this way.

This is, mark you, not merely a statement of truth. This is something very searching for *us*, as to our being children of God, being the spiritual children of the travail of Christ. This is not some-

thing that is extra to the Christian life, or for those who advance to certain heights and degrees. Right from our new birth, you and I, every one of us, ought to have a faculty of spiritual understanding and perception and knowledge that is possessed by no other person outside this Kingdom! We could spend much time in pointing out the tragedies that have come into Christianity because of failure to recognise or live up to this. I would go so far as to say that the largest proportion of all the trouble between Christians is due to either a lack of, or a failure to live on, the basis of spiritual understanding, spiritual discernment, spiritual perception, spiritual knowledge. There is any amount of natural knowledge in the Christian world: Bible knowledge, prophetic knowledge, and what not. But spiritual knowledge is a rare commodity; and yet it is supposed to be a constituent of our new birth from above, a faculty that we ought to have.

Now, if you are thinking: 'Then woe is me—I don't know much about that!', the Lord is simply saying to you: 'Look here, this is yours by rights. It is not some extra thing to which you attain by struggle and effort, or by years of laborious Christian living, or by some specific act, some terrific upheaval in your spiritual life. It is a *birth* thing, it is a *birth* right: you have a *right* to this!' But it may be that, after all, you *do* know in this way, although you do not know that you know! You have a new sense, a new faculty, a new 'something' in you, that causes you to know—in some measure at least—what is of the Lord and what is not, what is spiritual and what is not. But oh for the increase of that! It is the development of *that*, the increase of *that*, which is the apprenticeship in the school of Christ. We learn by mistakes, we learn by blunders, but the thing that we are learning is not something objective. We are learning inwardly that such and such is not the way of life and we should do well to avoid it; and that such and such *is* the way of life, and that is the way for us to go. We learn it inwardly. It is a new kind of knowledge.

A NEW POWER

This spiritual Israel is constituted also with a new kind of *power*. This particular kind of seed, or Divine progeny, has a power, an ability, a strength, which is quite different. One of the things that we learn in this apprenticeship, in this school, if we are apt pupils, if we are really abandoned to know the Lord, is that the Lord will deliberately undercut and undermine our natural strength. He will bring us to positions where the very best natural strength of any kind cannot cope with the situation; where, if we are to go through, we shall

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

require a strength that is not in us by nature at all, even though we might be the very best specimens of humanity. We come back to Nicodemus. 'You just cannot', said the Lord to Nicodemus, 'you just cannot. You may be as willing as anybody could be, you may be as anxious and as interested, but what stands over you is CANNOT.' The great question, arising again and again from Nicodemus' lips, is: "How . . .?", "How . . .?" He cannot. But this seed has something of a strength which is different, quite different from all that. Peter speaks of it as: "the strength which God supplieth" (I Pet. iv. 11). It is an ability of another order.

And so we could go on with the constitution. But it will all amount to this—that it is of another generation. It is of the generation of Christ. There are here capacities and possibilities and resources which are from Heaven, which cannot be accounted for on earth at all.

In point of fact, the old Israel was put on to that basis, though in a symbolic or typical way. We pointed out in our last study that they were put on to the basis of Christ, and we saw just what it meant for them to be put on to that basis. When everything went wrong with them spiritually and morally, and they were unworthy of the name of Israel, they were just rooted up from the land. Those twelve sons of Jacob, behaving as they did—putting Joseph in the pit, deceiving their father, and even counselling murder, and then the exposure of them before their brother whom they did not recognise in Egypt—it is a sorry tale. What breakdown! What failure! And so Israel must be put on to the ground of Christ, through death and resurrection; they must come into the meaning of His travail, be born out of it; and then their after life must be constituted on the same basis, the basis of Christ, so that, for those ensuing forty years in the wilderness, there is no accounting for their bread or their water, or for anything else, on any other ground than that of heaven. "It was not Moses that gave . . . the bread . . . ; but my Father . . ." (John vi. 32). It was heavenly. You see the point: they were constituted according to Christ, with resources that are not explicable on any other ground than that they are from heaven.

Thank God for that! It is the most wonderful thing to live on Christ—to live on heavenly ground! Perhaps you are thinking that this spiritual life must be a very difficult one. Well, for the flesh, of course it is! For the natural man, of course it is! To the self life, it certainly is. But the spiritual life is a romance. What the Lord does—oh, it is just wonderful. How my heart went with a brother whom I recently heard speaking about ministry!

Would not our flesh always like to have everything well worked out and mapped and planned in advance—have it all there, so that to give the word is really no trouble at all! But the Lord shuts us up and holds us up, and gets us into a perfect travail over a message, waiting so often until the very last minute—and then it comes! That is a personal testimony of over thirty years. It is something wonderful. This is no theoretical matter. It is marvellously real, and really marvellous.

That is the nature and constitution of this new Israel. This seed is a mystery, this Israel is a mystery; everything to do with it is a mystery. It cannot be understood by natural means at all. But do not take that the wrong way, interpreting it to mean that we have got to be very 'mysterious' people! There are many people trying to be mysterious, under the mistaken idea that that is spirituality. But this mystery is the mystery of a *life*.

THE MYSTERY OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Of course, even life in the natural is a mystery. We cannot explain life; we do not know what life is. It is the greatest reality, and yet it is the thing which is most impossible of explanation. But in the real realm of the spiritual there is another life, and this life is an even greater mystery. It is a life that persists in spite of everything that can be set against it. The mystery about the Church, about the people of God, is the mystery of this life—how it survives, how it goes on, how it increases. There is nothing in all this universe which is so assaulted, so set against, as this life of the people of God. All the dark, sinister forces of Satan seem to have but one ultimate object—namely, in some way to quench this life. All the experiences through which the Lord allows His people to go (and sometimes takes them), which, looked at naturally, could be said to be death, are only allowed in order to bring out this wonderful reality—that there is a life which, when put to the test, subjected to every kind of trial, survives, overcomes.

The power, persistence, and progress of this life are a mystery. The more the children of Israel were oppressed, the more they grew. Carry that over into the spiritual Israel. It looks to-day very much as though the evil forces—hell and men—are reducing the Church, by putting to death, or by driving out of triumphant faith, many of the Lord's people. Ah, but that is not the end of the story. These blind instruments of evil are fools—they cannot read history. If they could, they would see that what they are doing is the very thing that is going to accomplish what they are trying to frustrate. Oh, no—make no mistake about it: long

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

centuries of terrible ordeal have proved this, that there is a persistence and an increase here that is a mystery; you cannot explain or account for it naturally at all.

Now that should be true of every child of God. So take hope, take heart, dear tried one. If you are feeling that your way is more death than life, that the ordeal is tending to be one of total reduction, remember that that is not the end of the story.

THE ESSENTIAL APPRENTICESHIP FOR THE KINGDOM

I come now to this matter of the 'essential apprenticeship', as I am calling it, for the kingdom of God. That is, the Lord Jesus whose twelve—and we have seen the significance of His act—"that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth". Here are two halves of one thing, essential halves. "Be with him"—why? That He might teach, that He might instruct, that He might equip, *in order that* He might send forth. All going forth must issue from the closest association with Christ in His school. And all association with Christ in His school must issue in going forth! The Lord does not want people shut up in monasteries and cloisters, and places like that, always studying and learning, accumulating knowledge of things, even though they might be heavenly things. Every bit of God-imparted knowledge is to be for practical purposes. And no practical activity which does not come out of God-imparted knowledge will affect the kingdom of God. So these are the two things.

Now, note that all Christ's teaching, instructing, training of the twelve came out of His own spiritual life. It did not come out of books; it did not come out of the schools. This was a thing that baffled the scholars of His day. "Whence . . . hath this man all these things?" (Matt. xiii. 56). "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John vii. 15). He was not a man of the schools; He was not a man of the library, of the study. It all came out of His own spiritual life. He had a spiritual knowledge which was unique. It differed entirely from every other kind of knowledge.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

For one thing—and this was the basis of everything else—His knowledge of the Father was unique. Consider this statement: "No one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Luke x. 22). 'No one knoweth who the Father is, save the Son'. That is

a sweeping statement, a tremendous claim! But His unique knowledge of the Father sprang, not out of studying, not out of contemplating, but out of the inward spiritual oneness between the Father and Himself.

Now note this: the Fatherhood of God was not a *doctrine*, preached by Jesus to the general public. You can confirm that from the record in the Gospels. It was a *mystery*, disclosed to His disciples in private. The Fatherhood of God was no doctrine with Jesus, no theory: it was a reality in His own spiritual life and in His own spiritual being. To the twelve He made the Fatherhood of God real—not by argument, nor by much speaking, but because the Father was to Him the supreme reality in His life. All His training of the twelve came out of that; His teaching came out of that. And you note how much there was in His teaching of them and training of them which centred in the Father. How often did He refer to or address the Father! If you are not impressed, look it up again. This was the heart of everything in His training of these men. His teaching on prayer was all based upon that. "After this manner . . . pray ye: Our Father . . ." (Matt. vi. 9). I repeat: this was not for the general public. It was something on the inside of the school; it was a mystery disclosed alone to those on the inside. But it was made real.

Now, this new Israel has to be constituted on that basis. Just as the Lord Jesus trained the twelve on the basis of His union with the Father, so all our training will be through our union with Christ—a union as vital as was His with the Father: so that we, in union with the Son, may ourselves come into the mystery and wonder of the Fatherhood. It is a secret within this spiritual seed, within the Israel of God: the wonderful secret of the Fatherhood, not as a title, but as a great reality. How much we should be saved from if that became as real in our beings as it was in His! From beginning to end His reference is to the Father, His deference is to the Father; His appeal is always to the Father. The controlling reality in all His movements is the Father; everything for Him comes from the Father. The last words that He uttered were addressed to the Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). It was this that kept Him strong, it was this that kept Him right. It was the great motive force in His refusing everything that the Devil offered Him; it was His motive power in enduring suffering. The Father was everything to Him, in every way—'all in all'; a deep inward reality.

I suggest that we lack something vital in constitution if we lack an adequate sense of our spirit-

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

ual union with God as our Father in Christ Jesus. When we get as near to Him as that, or get Him as near as that, we begin to see something. Because, you see, the Lord Jesus sought to inculcate into the disciples, the new Israel, the meaning of this relationship between Himself, as Son, and the Father. It was something of practical account in their relationship with one another. For He was not constituting a kind of *clientèle* or following, a new movement of people of common interests: He was constituting a family.

That is made so clear by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren . . . I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 11-13). In effect, and in definite statement, the Lord is saying: 'Now, I want you to realise that you are all brethren, you are all of one family, because you are children of one Father in the deepest reality of your constitution. That is the basis on which you should regard one another and behave toward one another. You are to cherish and care for one another, even as I have loved you.' You see, this is the same thing: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"—to the uttermost (John xiii. 1). That was only making practical in their corporate life the relationship between Himself and His Father, the Father and Himself. It was a training.

DISCIPLINE

Mark you, it was a discipline, too, a real discipline: for if ever there were twelve diverse kinds of people on this earth, it was these twelve. Yes, there was something there of every kind. Temperamentally, constitutionally, naturally, they would fly into fragments at any moment. There is nothing here naturally of cohesion, integration. But under His hand, in His school, something is going to happen. At any rate, if the symbolism of the book of the Revelation means anything at all, there is something fairly solid in its last chapters! For we read that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 14). Here they are making one solid basis for the everlasting Kingdom. Something has happened.

Now that is what the Lord is trying to do with us. If you feel that you cannot get on with another child of God, just ask Him to move them away, or move you away, and see what happens! You will find that you have got into the realm where the Lord takes no notice of your prayer—at least until something has happened in you. The Lord lets us

go through all the 'sand-papery' and difficulty of these contradictory dispositions and temperaments amongst His children. We think: 'Oh, wouldn't it be good if only He would take that very difficult person away!' But it seems that the Lord does nothing about it, on the outside. No, He is going to do something on the inside. He may eventually take them away, but not until that something inside has been done. That is a part of the apprenticeship to the Kingdom. How can we rule or reign together in the Kingdom, if we are all in a state of mutual contradiction and conflict? No, the Lord is not going to have a kingdom like that, nor a government like that.

So, their being "with Him" was for the purpose of deep practical instruction and teaching in all this meaning of the Fatherhood of God, that this deep secret and mystery might find its expression in a corporate life.

Now this matter of training covers a vast amount of ground, and many other aspects than the one that I have mentioned. Let me just point out this. While it is true that the Kingdom came on the day of Pentecost, the New Testament speaks of the Kingdom in three tenses—past, present and future: it has come, it is coming, and it has yet to come. It is with a view to that coming now and yet to come that you and I are being trained. We are in school now for the present coming of the Kingdom. It will not come, except through the discipline of those who are called into fellowship with Christ. And the final manifestation and appearing of the Kingdom is something for which a great preparation is going on, a preparation of us all. Whatever may be involved in this apprenticeship, this training, in relation to the Kingdom, in every one of its aspects, it is of the greatest importance that we recognise this. We are in school with a view to the Kingdom.

NO REALISATION WITHOUT THE CROSS

Now, whatever may have been the aspect of the training in the case of the disciples, notice how Jesus held everything to the Cross. He leaves the multitude, He leaves the world, and takes these men apart with Himself: He speaks to them of deep things, wonderful things—and then He heads it all up to His going to Jerusalem, being delivered into the hands of the rulers and crucified. (See Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 22, 23; xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34; Luke xviii. 31-33.) That was something they could not accept, they could not understand; that was the thing that stumbled them. But He held everything to that, as though He would say: 'All this that I have been saying to you, all this that I have been holding up to view, all this for

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

which I have chosen you, all this for which you have been in the school with Me, is based upon the Cross. Not one bit of it can be realised apart from the Cross. You can come into not a fragment of it, except by way of the Cross. The Cross is essential to your being this Israel. You will be born out of that travail, and before that you will be scattered, every man of you.'

How true it was! But out of His travail, out of His tomb, out of His resurrection, they were born as an organic entity. How they stood up together on the day of Pentecost! I do not think they had ever been together quite like that before. This is a new togetherness. They are born on the day of Pentecost. The new Israel is here. It has been spoken about and prepared for; it has had much instruction, much teaching, and much handling; but it wanted the Cross to produce it.

So for the Israel of God the Cross is essential. The Cross is essential to the Kingdom, the reign; the Cross is essential to the service, the administration. I am deeply impressed by something in that part of the prophecies of Isaiah from which we have taken our basic passage—Isaiah liii. 10, 11. The real beginning of that chapter is, of course, not as marked in our arrangement, but at verse 13 of chapter lii: "Behold, my servant . . ." And then we read on about the suffering Servant. But what is said of Him immediately? "He shall be . . . very high." How? The next verse says: "His visage was so marred more than any man . . ." A few verses later we read: "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: we hid as it were our faces from him

. . ." "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But we were wrong: "He was wounded for our transgressions . . ." And then on to our passage: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied".

Who is this? The Servant of the Lord. "Behold, my servant". And He chose twelve who were to be "with Him" in the service of the Kingdom. They were to be the servants of the Kingdom—His fellow-servants. You notice from the margin that some authorities add (as in Luke vi. 13): "whom also he named apostles". Here, then, is the whole service of the Kingdom fully in view: but it is only, as in Isaiah liii. 10, 11, by the travail. It all comes out of the travail—there is no other way. The natural disposition has to be undone by the Cross, disintegrated, broken up and scattered. It is a false thing that cannot stand and will not go through; it is proved to be unsubstantial. Another thing must be brought in which is spiritual—that is, of the Spirit—and which can go through. The Cross is the instrument of God to bring about the new Israel, the new Kingdom, and the new servants of the Kingdom.

May the Lord say something to all our hearts: show us what kind of people He is after, and why He is taking the way with us that He is. He has in view a service—here, and more so hereafter—which requires a people after this kind. The Lord make us like that!

T. A-S.

THE TESTIMONY OF RESURRECTION

Reading: Ezekiel xxxvii.

"And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, O my people" (vs. 13).

"And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 23).

THE Spirit's purpose is to glorify the Name of the Lord among all the nations. He plans to do this through the people of God. But the people of God can never be His true witnesses until they themselves have had a mighty experience of His power in their own lives—an experience that is nothing

less than a resurrection from the dead, and therefore something that is wholly of Himself. "Ye shall know . . ."—that is the first requirement; "and the nations shall know . . ."—that is the end in view. Our testimony is to be a testimony of resurrection life.

THE SPIRIT'S PROBLEM

Ezekiel's vision was a revelation of the true state of natural man. It is with this unpromising material that the Spirit undertakes to raise up a testimony to the mighty Name of the Lord. The prophet's first reaction must have been to wonder how ever this valley of dry bones came about. Was it the result of some dreadful catastrophe? Had some extraordinary pestilence smitten the people? Had there been a great battle and a singularly tragic

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

defeat? The answer was: No, none of these things. This was just natural man as God sees him. This is nothing unusual: tragic, yes, but common enough—as common as human nature. The hand of the Lord was on Ezekiel, and he was seeing things as God sees them. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Light and of Truth. And it is He who makes clear by this graphic vision that the true spiritual state of men—all men—is as of dry and scattered bones.

REALISATION OF THE FACT

God had, of course, told Adam that this would happen: “. . . in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. ii. 17). Just because Adam did not at once fall down dead, many people who read that Scripture cannot credit it. But spiritual death is not so easily observed. It may be that Adam appreciated something of the tragedy which had happened inside him, but, even if he did, the awareness probably passed as the days went by. The race multiplied. They seemed far from dead—indeed very much alive. But beneath the surface, they were now—spiritually—a dead race, and their world nothing better than a valley of dry bones. It is true that from time to time, by the grace of God, men were raised from that death, and walked in blessed fellowship with God. Spiritually these were resurrection men. But the vast mass of people never knew this life; they lay like dried-out bones scattered in an open valley. And one feature of their death was, as it still is to-day, that they had no consciousness of it.

Now, at last, the realisation had dawned upon them. At long last the people of Israel had come to appreciate their true condition. “Behold”, says the Lord, “they say, Our bones are dried up” (v. 11). It was this which made Ezekiel a prophet of hope. This is the reason why this particular chapter introduces an altogether new prospect of glory. It is a most hopeful sign when a man or a people begin to see themselves as God sees them. For it was not that they had only just died. Even their captivity was not the beginning of their death; it had but served to emphasize a long-standing condition—the spiritual deadness of which the prophets had complained for so long.

Ezekiel's is the third of the great written prophetic ministries. Isaiah and Jeremiah had preceded him, and the period spanned by their three ministries was considerable. Isaiah, from the beginning of his service, had been in no doubt as to the bad spiritual condition of the people. It was he who spoke of man's total sickness, his wounds and

bruises and putrifying sores (Is. i. 5, 6), and it was he who in the presence of the Divine glory cried out that he and the people around him were unclean and undone (vi. 5). By Jeremiah's time the sad spiritual death was far more apparent, though the people themselves would never admit it. They tried to cover their dry bones with the cloaks of religion and ceremonial. They could not understand Jeremiah's dismal calls to repentance. ‘Repentance, indeed!’, said they—when they took such pride in their temple and spent so much on their frankincense from Sheba and their sweet cane from a far country (Jer. vi. 20)! This is one of man's commonest subterfuges, this attempt to cover up spiritual death with religion. “Whited sepulchres” were the words which the Lord Jesus used (Matt. xxiii. 27). What it amounts to is that men were denying that they were really corrupt, insisting that they were not so bad as all that. It is striking that there is not one mention of the Holy Spirit in all the long fifty-two chapters of Jeremiah. The reason is plain enough. Wherever there are those who claim self-righteousness, who refuse to acknowledge their utter deadness as before God, there is no place for the Spirit; for the life which He offers us is resurrection life—that and no other.

USELESSNESS TO GOD

This, then, is the natural man. Call him an Israelite, if you will, or call him a Christian; but whatever you call him, it will not make any difference to the valley of dry bones. This, mark you, was the people that had been called to serve the Lord among the nations. It would be difficult to find anything more expressive of absolute uselessness than these scattered bones. The first vision which Ezekiel had was very different indeed. It spoke of life and purpose, of mighty, living instruments for the fulfilling of the will of God. It was the vision of the Enthroned Man in Heaven, directing glorious living embodiments of the character of God; of wheels of purpose with eyes of understanding and perception; of direct, irresistible movement—wings and wheels, and wheels within wheels, whirling on with a sound like mighty waters; and round it all the rainbow of hope (Ezek. i). That is how things ought to be—how they are when the Spirit of Life is in charge.

Now this later vision came down to the sad reality of things as they were: from the vital glory of the Heavenly Man to the dead despair of the natural man. It is not unlike the contrast between the early Church and the Church of our day. The first chapter of Ezekiel finds its counterpart in the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

first chapters of the book of the Acts: they set forth the mighty effectiveness for God of those who live in the power of resurrection. Alas, that the vision has now turned to this later one of Ezekiel xxxvii, and the purposes of God seem to be entrusted to those who are of no more use to Him than the dry bones of the valley. No wonder Ezekiel would not commit himself when asked by the Lord whether he thought there was any hope for such a situation. No wonder that he parried the question with—"O Lord God, thou knowest" (v. 3). How can dry bones testify to the great Name of the Lord among the nations? How indeed?

SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

Emphasis is laid on the fact that the bones were dry—"very dry" (v. 2). Their form may have been correct, their shapes just as they should be according to the text-books, but they had no vitality. It was not just that they felt dry—we often feel like that—but that their effect on others was lifeless. This is a very thirsty world, and the pity is that often the church is too dry to meet its needs. Very dry, these bones were; and if, even for a moment, we cease to abide in Christ, the same is true of us. The challenge catches us unprepared. Just when we encounter thirsty hearts and would wish to convey to them some spontaneous outflowing of the water of life, we ourselves are dry. Such moments pass. The opportunity is soon gone. Had they met Christ in us, they would have met life; but, as they only meet what we are naturally, they find but dry bones.

The bones were also scattered. They were not a number of skeletons, though that would have been bad enough; the situation was worse than that—they were scattered, disconnected bones. Now the purpose of a bone is only served by reason of its relationship with other bones. However much sinew, muscle and flesh you may be able to build up around a bone, there can be no vital functioning until that bone is properly linked up with its fellows. It has to be subordinate to the others. Even the large bones depend on small ones. It also finds its strength and support from such relatedness. That is how God's people are meant to be, vitally integrated, submitting to one another and supporting one another. Unless and until that happens there is no opportunity for the mighty Spirit of life to express Himself through them.

Moreover the bones were static, immobile; they were so to speak becalmed, shut up in a valley. As soon as we move into the purposes of God, the effective word is not 'valley' but 'mountain'. The

visions of God take us to a "very-high mountain" (Ezek. xl. 2). As soon as these were changed from dry bones into a living people, it was said of them: "I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel" (xxxvii. 22). There are mountains of purpose, mountains of opportunity, mountains of blessing, mountains of glory. But dry bones cannot reach the mountains. They are powerless to rise out of their low-level valleys.

This, then, represented the Spirit's problem. "Can these bones live?" It is an up-to-date problem. It is the problem of how what we are by nature can become what we ought to be in the will of God.

THE SPIRIT'S ANSWER

The Spirit has, of course, an answer to this problem. It is the answer of resurrection. But we must never be glib or superficial in our consideration of the power of Pentecost. For the task which the Spirit has taken in hand—nothing less than that of changing a valley of dry bones into a living effective instrument of the will of God—is truly stupendous.

In the work of God there is no alternative to the Holy Spirit. Men invent alternatives, and try to run the work of God by means of them, but the result is doomed to failure. Organization is often used as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. Now organization may have its place; indeed, the term "an exceeding great army" (v. 10) indicates that there had to be arrangement and discipline. Let us note, however, that they were not organized into life. That cannot be done. The bones could have been gathered together, arranged, grouped, classified, man-handled, but they would still have been bones. And they would still have been "very dry". We cannot manipulate or fuss people into spiritual life or growth; it must take place by resurrection life from within.

Not infrequently instruction and teaching are used as alternatives to the Holy Spirit's inward working of life. There was all the difference in the world between Ezekiel's words of prophecy (vv. 4-10) and human attempts to reason or persuade. Teaching would have been wasted on dry bones, though it would doubtless be very helpful once they were quickened into life. No, instruction or mental enlightenment is no substitute for resurrection life.

The same is true of every effort which is only human, however well-intentioned it may be. Enthusiasm, exhortation, confessions, even praying; all this, although right enough in its place, is piti-

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

fully inadequate to meet this great challenge of spiritual death. The 'noise', or 'thundering' (v. 7, mg.), which followed Ezekiel's prophesying was not the sound of human effort or zeal, but the token of God's moving in response to his words. (Compare Psalm xviii. 7, 13.)

INWARD LIFE AN ACT OF GOD

In God's first speaking about this mighty change, He passed over all the preliminaries of the sinews and the flesh and the skin, coming straight to the essential matter: "Behold, I will cause spirit to enter into you, and ye shall live" (v. 5). That is what God will do—what He alone can do: He will put new life within by the breath of His Spirit. There was a double element about Ezekiel's ministry: he prophesied twice—first to the dry bones and then to the Spirit of God. It pertains to the true ministry of a prophet to pray as well as to preach, and to do both so effectually that, by an inward Divine miracle, the issue is life from the dead.

Some may ask why, in spite of all their prayer and study of the Word, they still lack this mighty answer of life. May not the answer be that the Lord Himself has to wait until there is, literally, no other hope? Those who still have some hope in themselves, or who are trying to bring over some vestige of the old nature into the new realm, are obviously delaying the full work of the Spirit, which must be on resurrection ground. If a man refuses to identify himself as the driest of the dry bones, or if a group cannot concede that before God this valley vision truly describes their state, then they cannot complain if the positive side of the vision also eludes them. The two go together. The 'answer of death in ourselves' (II Cor. i. 9) gives the Spirit the opportunity to provide the answer of life, resurrection life, in Christ.

THE SPIRIT'S INSTRUMENT

We need to consider the prophet himself more closely, for it is clear that he played an important part in this mighty resurrection movement. He could not have had less promising material, yet he experienced, as few other preachers of the Word can have done, the amazing effect of the power of the Word of God. Nevertheless, it was not done apart from Ezekiel and from his own personal experiences with God; he had a resurrection ministry because he was a resurrection man.

This means that he had been weakened in himself, smitten, as it were slain. Indeed, that is the

word used of the dry bones: "O breath, . . . breathe upon these *slain*" (v. 9). Only those who have very real experiences of death with Christ can expect to know the true power of His resurrection.

He had been brought low by meeting the glory of God. "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face" (Ezek. i. 28). It was from that place of absolute emptying of all merit or strength that he was raised up for his ministry. "And the spirit entered into me . . . and set me upon my feet" (ii. 2). Such complete and *conscious* natural emptiness, and altogether Divine raising up, are essential for a ministry of the Spirit in power. He was also brought very low by the sufferings of his ministry. He was not an unbroken man preaching down at the people from the heights of his own superiority, but was himself a sign of the words he spoke; he had to go through all the painful experiences himself before he could minister about them. Moreover he suffered in his private life. It is amazing how the Lord makes use of His servants' home life and domestic affairs to bring them into new experiences of their need of Him. Ezekiel lost his wife (xxiv. 16-18), and in that loss had a further experience of the Cross working in him. He must have suffered greatly by being kept dumb (iii. 26; cf. xxiv. 27, xxxiii. 22). He who so burned to proclaim the message was forbidden to preach for a time. His eloquence was a byword among the people; he was the most popular orator of his day. From far and wide the people invited one another to come and hear the beautiful words of this golden-mouthed speaker (xxxiii. 30). "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument" (v. 32). It could have been no easy matter for such a man to refrain from preaching.

This all fits into a pattern. Whether in his communion with God, his home, his ministry, his ambitions or his joys, he became a man who from a human point of view was frustrated, disappointed, emptied out, cast down to the depths. But in this lay the secret of his powerful ministry. In all this he first proved for himself the mighty power of resurrection, and then became the mouthpiece and minister of that same power.

THE SPIRIT'S OBJECTIVE

Why should the Lord handle His servant so roughly? Only because of the ministry to be released through him. And why should He deal with His people as He did with Israel: why bring them so low, and indeed, since they were so unworthy, why trouble about them at all? The answer is that

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

He had the world in view. He wanted the *nations* to know the power and glory of His great Name, and He intended to use Israel as His witnesses to them. He intended thus to work mightily in them, not for their own good or comfort merely, but to provide a universal testimony to the greatness both of His grace and of His power. "And the nations shall know . . ." (xxxvi. 23). That is always the end which the Lord has in view when dealing with His own.

How could the nations know? Only by Israel themselves first knowing: "And ye shall know . . ." (xxxvii. 6, 13). This is not head knowledge; it is nothing superficial. The vision has shown us how deep and radical is such an experience of 'knowing' the Lord. And the Lord's principles have not changed. They are as true for us as they were for those in Ezekiel's day. There is to be a testimony to the Lord's Name in the fulness of the Spirit in us, but it can only be as we first know for ourselves the working of the mighty power of resurrection.

Years ago, when I lived in Brazil, I had the privilege of visiting certain very primitive Leper Colonies in two different places. In the first of these places, I went on several occasions to help preach the Gospel to the unfortunate lepers. Everything humanly possible was done to bring them the good news of salvation. We took food to them, we witnessed, we gave them Scriptures and we prayed.

I am sorry to say that I never heard of one in that place being truly converted. Later on in the course of my travels, I paid a call on another such colony. It so happened that, a little while before, a Brazilian Christian had become an inmate there. He was only a humble backwoodsman, who had heard the Gospel and turned to Christ. It is difficult to imagine any greater trial than that which faced this young Christian—to have to leave home and family and end his days in such a place of squalor and despair. It had been a bitter blow for him. Yet his faith held; he kept true to his Lord, and moreover he began to witness to his fellow lepers. When I went, I found there a little group of true Christians, all won to the Lord by this one man; there were songs of praise being raised to Christ, where hitherto there had been nothing but moaning and despair. Here was the true testimony. Not words only, not gifts, not even kindly prayers, but a life lived in the power of resurrection. He first knew the Lord's power to raise him from death in soul and spirit, and then those around knew because of him.

This homely example is but one instance of a great truth, a great spiritual principle: namely, that the true testimony in the Spirit's fulness is essentially a testimony of "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10).

H. F.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH, AND THE NATIONS

I. INTRODUCTORY

Reading: Acts i. 1-5.

"Jesus . . . was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen . . . and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

IT is of the greatest importance that we, as the Lord's people, should be deeply concerned about two things.

There should be in our hearts, in the first place, a very real concern for the fullest Christian life that it is possible to know. Such a concern is a necessary link between us and that which is the Lord's will for us: for you notice that, when the

incoming of the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the Word, the expression 'filled' is often used. The Lord's thought is 'fulness': it is not just that we should 'receive' the Spirit (cf. Acts viii. 15, 17), but that we should be *filled* with the Spirit; not just that we should be 'filled' (cf. I Cor. iv. 8), but that we should be filled *with the Spirit*. If, therefore, we are to come into God's thought for us, we need to be deeply exercised about this matter of knowing a life of as great a fulness as the Lord intends it to be.

And, in the second place, we should have a deep concern for the most effective possible witness in the world by the Church—that the Church's testimony in the nations should be as effective as the Lord would have it.

These two things are essential to the realisation of the Lord's thought and intention. But, in relation thereto, there are certain important considerations.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

NO CHURCH OR CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the first place, 'Christianity'—the Christian life and the Church—owes its very existence to the advent of the Holy Spirit, to that day which is marked out in history as 'the Day of Pentecost'. There had been many days of Pentecost before that one, for the Feast of Weeks, the feast of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest (Ex. xxiii. 16, xxxiv. 22), observed on the fiftieth day (Gk. *pentekostos*, fiftieth) after the Passover, was one of the seven principal festal seasons in Israel. The day of Pentecost had been observed year by year throughout the centuries. But there had never been a Day of Pentecost like this one. So much was this so, that this is the only 'Pentecost' that we ever think of when we use the word. We forget that it was an annual event, and so a commonplace in the life of Israel. Although, of course, the actual term 'Pentecost' only entered into the common vocabulary of the Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes of the latter centuries B.C., the feast itself formed part of the common course of Israelitish festivities; it was what we might almost call an 'everyday idea' in Israel. But that particular occasion swallowed up all the others. It brought into full meaning all that the others had foreshadowed; it was *The Day of Pentecost*, rightly called that in the Scripture. Christianity and the Church owe their existence to what happened on *that Day*. This means that there is no Christianity—there is no Church, as recognised in Heaven and in the Word of God—that is not the product of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, neither Church nor Christian life is possible.

From which, of course, it follows that Christianity and the Church can never fulfil their purpose, or reach their Divinely intended goal, on any other ground than that upon which they started, that is, upon the ground of the Holy Spirit. No alternatives are open to them; there are no substitutes for the Holy Spirit available. If the Holy Spirit does not continue with them, then Christianity and the Church lose the very meaning of their existence.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLAY THE 'ACTS' OF THE SPIRIT

A second consideration is this. The opening phase of the Holy Spirit's activity was not just a set of unrelated acts. We have sometimes substituted for the artificial and unwarranted title in our Bible, 'The Acts of the Apostles', that other and better title, 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit';

but we have still regarded the events that are here recorded as a mere set of acts. We rightly attribute them to the Holy Spirit; but for us they are still just so many—of course very wonderful—'acts'. And yet, they were not just unrelated acts of the Holy Spirit, and certainly not of the apostles. The falsity of the latter title is seen in the fact that not half-a-dozen of the apostles have a place in the book, after the first chapter. After being listed there *in toto*, most of them then disappear from the book completely; and the apostles who really play a part in the 'Acts' are very few—Peter and Paul, and one or two others. No; this may be a record of the acts of *some* apostles, but it certainly is not a record of *the Acts of the Apostles*, as a whole.

My point is this: that the 'acts' that are here narrated were related to fundamental principles of the Holy Spirit. These events were not the beginning and end of everything, in themselves; they were the demonstration of certain spiritual realities which lay behind them. We go completely astray when we fail to recognise this. They were not merely isolated 'happenings', without further meaning than themselves. They had a very deep meaning—a much greater significance than what merely appeared on the surface; they carried with them deep spiritual truths. If you and I are really concerned about this matter of a full Christian life and of the Church's effective witness in the nations, we have got to get behind the 'acts' to the *meaning* of the acts, to the principles which the acts demonstrated; for they were all most significant things, as we shall see later.

THE CHURCH AT THE BEGINNING— AND NOW

At this point, we must note—what is, alas, only too obvious—the sad contrast existing between the first thirty years of Christianity and of the Church, and that of all the centuries since. There really has been nothing in all these centuries comparable to those thirty years. The known 'world', certainly, was a very much smaller place than it is now. But, even so, making all allowance for this, the indisputable fact remains that then, in that more limited known world of nations and people, an impact was registered with which nothing that has occurred since bears any comparison. It is doubtful whether all the subsequent centuries put together could represent the spiritual force that was there in those early years. The witness in the nations was unparalleled in its effectiveness. We need only to recall what happened during the lifetime of the Apostle Paul alone: to think of how

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

things were when Paul was converted—the Church small and struggling, limited in range and in effect—and then of the situation when Paul went to the Lord—churches in practically every nation, and many far beyond all national locations. “Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. x. 18)—that is the statement. It is a tremendous record for a mere thirty years of Christian service, on the part, mainly, of one man. There has been nothing to compare with it since.

But there then set in something which checked the spiritual impact almost entirely—indeed, started a downgrade movement; so that, but for little lamps of testimony, from time to time, here and there, in remote places, the Church as a whole lost its testimony in the world, and its sense of responsibility for it. So deeply and terribly was that true, that, even at so late a period as the end of the eighteenth century, when William Carey (1761 - 1834), away in a country church, was speaking about the obligation that rests upon the Church of God for taking the Gospel of Christ to the heathen, he was immediately pounced upon by a member of the gathered company, and rebuked with: ‘Young man, if God ever wants to evangelize the heathen, He will do it with better material than you!’ ‘He will do it without our help’—that was the thought. There was an utter loss of a sense of responsibility.

But then there came a revival—what we may call a ‘renaissance’—of that responsibility. I am not going to give a history of missions: that is not the point; but just think of all that has been devoted to this undertaking during, say, the last hundred years. Think of all the lives that have gone out into the nations with the inspiration to evangelize—a great and mighty army of men and women; think of all the millions of money that have been poured into this. If it were possible to produce a comprehensive document, or statement, showing how many Societies have been, and are now, engaged in this work, and how many representatives they have had since they were founded, and how much organization there has been, and how many countries have given of their resources in persons and means and energy, it would be a startling and amazing story.

To-day, with it all, not half of the world knows anything about the Gospel! not half the world is touched! And what is more, Christianity is losing its influence in this world—you have only to look at our own country of Britain to see this. We are noting it in these very days. How tragic is the loss of testimony in high places, the loss of the place of

God amongst authorities and rulers; the terrible growth of godlessness, and God-forgetfulness, and God-ignoring, in the Western world. What is the matter?

I say all this by way of drawing a comparison. In the beginning, the Church registered such an impact upon this earth that men were provoked to say: “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither”! (Acts xvii. 6). Rulers and nations—and hell—were stirred, were provoked with fear for the presence of this ‘thing’. It is not like that now. I do not dwell too much upon it, but, with every honour and respect for all that is devoted and true and sacrificing, the spiritual ineffectiveness to-day, the kind of Christianity that is so very general, makes a terrible story—I am speaking quite generally. Why? what is the matter?

THE LORD WOULD CONTINUE HIS ORIGINAL WORK

It brings us back to this whole question of the Holy Spirit. And it challenges us, and provokes in us, surely, some questions. The question that immediately arises in our hearts is: Have we any ground for believing that the Holy Spirit would continue or repeat the works of those first thirty years? Was it just something for a time? Did God just then, in this massive way, demonstrate something, which He did not intend to be perpetuated or repeated: something that was for a time only, something merely to be looked back upon?

I think the answer lies in two directions.

First of all, surely it is at least implied in the words of Luke at the beginning of this second treatise of his: “The former treatise I made . . . concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up”. Implicit in that statement is—not only that now Luke is saying: ‘I am going to tell you what Jesus *continues* to do after He is received up’—but, surely, that His ‘receiving up’, and His continuing of the work from His heavenly position, is something that is not related to time at all, much less to the few short years of one man’s life, His life on earth. Surely we have ground for believing that the Lord, from His heavenly position, would go on. And in reality He is going on with His work: because, as the Scriptures throughout testify, it is a work for a whole dispensation. The Lord Jesus Himself said: “I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age” (Matt. xxviii. 20, mg.). The end of the age did not come when the Apostle Paul was executed and went to the Lord!

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

But we have other evidence that answers our question: namely, the fact that through this age, and even in our own day, wherever the Lord has His required conditions He does this very thing. *He does it*—the thing happens! It may not be world-wide; nevertheless, here and there, from time to time, the Lord has done something comparable in its range to what happened at the beginning—He has just done it. And, in some parts of the world, He is doing it now: it is there, and it can be seen. The Lord is doing something quite wonderful, and when you see it and know it, you have to say: This is just what we read of in the book of the Acts! Yes, there are instances through history that prove that, if the Lord has His required

conditions, He would go on with the same kind of work as He did at the beginning.

That leads us, of course, to ask the further question: Why was the work arrested? why, at a certain clearly defined point in the history of Christianity, did the work begin to fade out? You can see when it began to happen; and, if you look into it carefully, you can see why it began to happen. We could, in fact, put the question in another form: What is the ground of the Holy Spirit's work? If we can answer the second question, we have answered the first—why it was arrested? The answer is found in a discovery of the ground upon which the Holy Spirit works, and continues His working.

T.A.S.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING AND PRESENCE

"And when the day of Pentecost was now (fully) come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . ."

"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear."

"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. 1 - 4; 32, 33; 39.)

"Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God" (I Kings xviii. 38, 39).

"And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (I Chronicles xxi. 26).

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house" (II Chronicles vii. 1, 2).

THESE passages, and others which we shall consider, bring before us the significance of the Holy Spirit's coming and presence. Nowadays, we tend to look back to the day of the coming of the Holy Spirit. There is, of course, a true meaning or significance of that first coming of the Spirit of God, which we need to understand, but we need to recognize His presence here to-day.

THE NEED OF OUR DAY

There is no doubt that we are living in a day of great need, and, in many hearts, of great concern. Among the people of God there is much searching of heart as to why there is so little impact, so little evidence of the seal of God. Many individual Christians, too, are conscious of a lack in their lives, which they feel the Lord would fill. And the result of this sense of need, is a searching round for something; and, as we know, there is always something ready to fill a vacuum. In this way, many are being involved in something less than the reality which God intends for His people. There is great need for us to apprehend, both personally and together, what it really means that the Spirit of God came, and that the Spirit of God is here in His people, because it is something of no little significance.

We all agree that, when the Spirit of God came on the day of Pentecost, there was no doubt that something had happened! There was nothing weak about it; it was a tremendous thing. And tremendous things continued to happen—for that is how it is when God is present. By that we do not just mean that there are outward and visible wonders,

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

but that there is always something mighty and wonderful about anything that God is in. While His presence is sometimes quiet and unsuspected, it is not less potent for that.

A WORD OF CAUTION

In seeking to understand the real meaning of the Spirit's coming, we need to be careful about the terms we use. It is easy to talk of 'the fulness of the Holy Spirit', or of 'the power of the Holy Spirit', or of His blessings, or of His gifts; all these are attractive and sound like the thing we want. Only recently we have been in touch with some young people who are seeking what they call 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit'. They have met people with some certain kind of experience, and feel that this is something wonderful, something to be sought after. Then there are others who are earnestly praying for revival. Not that there is anything wrong with that; we all long for a great reviving. But, unless we have God's mind about this, we shall go astray. Either we shall be content with something less, or we shall become involved in something contrary to what God really intends. So I believe the Lord wants to instruct our hearts as to the principles which govern this whole matter.

PENTECOST:

(1) A LONG-AWAITED CLIMAX

What, then, is the real significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit?

First of all, looking back to the actual giving, or coming, of the Spirit at Pentecost, we see that it was a climax and a realisation. There had been a very long period of waiting; indeed, the whole of history from the beginning had only been preparatory; it had all been less than realisation. The Old Testament record, from the very beginning, tells of an unsatisfactory and inconclusive process, thereby continually pointing to a future realisation. We find that even the patriarchs were always moving toward a goal, to which however they never really came. Generation after generation passed away. Then we come to the history of God's earthly people, with its tragedies as well as its brief glories, and finally to the prophets with their great heart-cry which is never satisfied. And so the Old Testament finishes with the note of unrealised hope, and a great deal of disappointment.

Now the beginning of the answer was, of course, the presence here of the Son of God Himself. And yet, we need to remember that even His life, His mighty ministry, His death upon the Cross, His

resurrection, and His ascension, still looked for completion. When He had finished His work and returned to Heaven, how much further on was anybody? It sounds a terrible thing to say, does it not? The disciples might have said—'We had a wonderful time, and saw Him healing people, though many of them are dead now. We saw Him die and we have seen Him alive again.' But even after that, Peter said: "I go a fishing" (John xxi. 3). In spite of all that had happened, Peter was just the same; he was still awaiting the day of realisation. *But when the Holy Ghost came the whole thing became a reality.*

Now we could go back in detail over the Old Testament, and see how that which had been in preparation came into realisation. From the beginning there was delayed realisation, for when sin entered into the world, the whole creation was ruined and cursed, and so became without hope. But when the Holy Spirit came, a new creation came into being. God began again. He cancelled out four thousand years and began again. There is now an entirely new creation—there is a new kind of being here on the earth, who is not just of Adam's race, but is linked up with an eternal, abiding and glorious creation. What a climax! God brought in an altogether new and abiding creation when His Spirit came.

A NEW CREATION,

BASED UPON A NEW COVENANT

If you go back to what has been called 'the glories of the law'—and there was a glory, because Moses' face shone (Ex. xxxiv. 29 - 35; II Cor. iii. 7)—you find that the law could make nothing perfect (Heb. vii. 19, x. 1), and could never take away sin (x. 4, 11); it only revealed man's utter defeat by a standard which could never be kept. But then comes the promise—"I will make a new covenant . . . this is the covenant that I will make . . . after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it . . . and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour . . . saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me . . ." (Jer. xxxi. 31, 33, 34; Heb. x. 16).

What a change from an external imposition, impossible of attainment, to a glorious indwelling reality! How much better to be in the enjoyment of what happened at Pentecost, than to go back before it! And yet, strange to say, many of God's children are living pre-Pentecost; they are living in a realm where the Spirit is not a reality, where the power of the living Spirit of God is hardly

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

known. Oh, the struggle to live the Christian life ; oh, the weariness of ' keeping it up '. What folly ! When the Holy Ghost is in charge, He does not need our efforts, for He is God. " The power of an indissoluble life " is what we read of the life that is in Christ (Heb. vii. 16): here is the end of a legal bondage and the beginning of a glorious liberty. Paul was able to say: " the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death " (Rom. viii. 2).

Have you entered into that? Where are we as Christians? Because, you see, the Spirit is here, and we ought to be in the good of this great fact. We ought to be living in the good of a new creation, with a mind free of earthly things, and set on " the things that are above, where Christ is . . . For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God " (Col. iii. 1 - 3). We have passed out of the old creation into a new one, and ought to be living there. Do you remember that hymn we used to sing years ago—' Leave the poor old sinking wreck, and pull for the shore '? We ought to abandon the old sinking wreck of this creation, and live in the new creation in Christ. For Pentecost has made it all available to us. Even all the glorious work of the Lord Jesus was not available until the Holy Ghost came ; that is why He said: " Wait for the promise of the Father . . . tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high . . . ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you " (Acts i. 4 ; Luke xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 8).

Pentecost marked a climax, when the partial and preparatory gave place to the reality. How important it is, then, for each one of us to abide in the realm of Divine life, and not to slip back into the realm of the natural life and of legalism. The Lord has lifted us, in His death and resurrection, into another realm, where our life is " hid with Christ in God ".

We have seen that Pentecost is the key to the fulfilment of the law in its legal and moral aspects ; but what of the sacrificial side of the worship—all the blood-shedding, and all the smoking altars? This, we know, was fulfilled in that " one offering " by which " he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified " (Heb. x. 14). And this perfect redemption was made available and effective by the coming of the Spirit.

The Christ, in whom God has secured everything, in whom redemption was perfected, in whose Person all the glory of God was deposited—" for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily " (Col. ii. 9)—He, by the Holy Spirit, became the life of His people at Pentecost. And so Paul says: " Christ, who is our life " (Col. iii. 4).

VITALITY AND REALITY BY THE SPIRIT

How important it is for us to see that all that we read about in the Old or the New Testament is *for us!* But it is unreal until the Holy Spirit makes it real. Do you see that? Even the promises of God are just ' words ', unless the Holy Spirit makes them live. Something has to happen. For the climax that was reached when the Spirit came was the end of unreality—the end of mere doctrines and theories and religion, and the beginning of an altogether new vitality and reality. It meant that everything that is in Christ for us was made real. Let us begin to enjoy the new creation, which is our true realm, and to answer Satan back, who is always pointing at what we are. We must say, ' Yes, but the Cross has dealt with that—Christ is my real life ', and he will go. We have the answer. And let us begin to take everything else that is available to us by the mighty work of the Lord Jesus, and to trust the Holy Spirit to make it all real. What a realm that is for further meditation, that everything in the Word of God has to be made real in us!

It is not enough just to know the Scriptures in an objective way ; it is essential that they should progressively become our very life. There should always be things in the Word of God which we have to admit that we do not know yet. There are many who think that they know everything, because they know what is in the Bible: it is dead letter unless the Holy Spirit has done something. That is why so much talking, and telling people the truth, does not get anywhere, because only what has happened in our own life has any impact. We ought to be people who can say, ' What we *have*, we give you ' (Acts iii. 6). Do not let us be those who try to give what they have not got! The point is this, that everything, by the coming of the Spirit, is now available to us as a reality.

So, the climax of Pentecost marks the end of an old creation, and the plunging of us all into a new one, the realm of the Holy Ghost. This is the meaning of that wonderful word in Romans viii, where Paul says: " But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit " (v. 9). Some of us are startled at it. We say, ' I do not know whether I am '—that is always our answer. But the Word of God says, " ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit " ; so we ought to say: ' I am glad that I am in the spirit, I am in the realm of life, where everything is of God, where everything is of the Spirit.' But perhaps you are saying: ' What about the so much that is a contradiction of this in my experience?' When you take a faith position with God, He can deal with all that ; but if you are always trying to climb out of

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

your position, He cannot do anything. You have got to stand upon His word, and let Him deal with anything in your life that may be lacking or contradictory.

PENTECOST: (2) GOD INDWELLING

The significance of Pentecost is found, in the second place, in this, that God then came to indwell His people. When the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He came as 'Emmanuel': "And they shall call his name Emmanuel . . . God with us" (Matt. i. 23). That is true: He was God; and when He was here, He was "God with us". But the day came when He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John xvi. 7); and 'when He comes, I will come' (John xiv. 18, 28). How much better this is!—not just "God with us", but now 'God *in* us'! To speak of 'God *in* us' is not blasphemy, because Peter says that God "hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. i. 4). We are also told that "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6), and that "He that hath the Son hath the life" (I John v. 12)—*the* Life. This clearly means that God is in us.

The Holy Ghost has come that God might not be remote, but *within* us; that we should not make prayers to a remote Deity, but have the Divine life within. For He has said: "I will dwell *in* them, and walk *in* them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (II Cor. vi. 16). God is not a God governing from a distant throne, but a God indwelling, and whose very nature is throbbing in our own hearts. What a glorious thing! When the Spirit came, God came. Let us face the fact: *God is here!* In writing to the Corinthians, who were not very exemplary Christians, Paul says that anyone coming in among them ought to fall down and say, 'God is in you!' (I Cor. xiv. 25). They ought not just to say—'What nice people', or, 'I did enjoy the meeting', or something of that kind; they ought to fall down and say, 'God is in you!' People ought to be up against God when they meet us, and not only up against Him, but finding Him very desirable.

PRACTICAL TRANSFORMATION

God is here. Do we know it? Do we recognise it? This is a very important matter, that in every child of God, the Holy Spirit dwells. When you believe on the Lord Jesus, when you take Him as

your Saviour, something happens inside. You find there is an inward life there that was not there before; you find that the Spirit of God, from within, begins to work a change. Every new birth is a miracle, in which this other Nature takes up residence, and begins to operate in its own amazing way in the life. It is wonderful to see the Lord at work in a life.

Some time ago I met some students who were playing in a jazz band, and then they were saved. However, they kept on going off with their trombones and other instruments, and, of course, I did not say anything. But I was talking to one of them later, and asked him, 'What about your musical instruments?' He just laughed at me and said: 'I have sold them.' Well, I did not discuss the matter, and I do not want to suggest that you must not have musical instruments. My point is this, that in this case there was a worldly link—it was a very worldly one, involving more than I can say—but the Lord just quietly showed him; and, oh, the joy on that young fellow's face! Now he is just going on from strength to strength. But it is the 'other nature' that is doing it; it is not that people are telling him what to do. It is the Holy Spirit; it is the 'new life', something of the very life of Heaven within him, which is rejecting this old creation. If you have Christ in you, you have the Holy Spirit in you. And the Holy Spirit wants to be recognised and trusted and obeyed, much more. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you . . .? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. vi. 19, 20).

So, He is not just here in the atmosphere. He is in you, if you are a child of God. This is something worth meditating upon. It is something so important that you and I should take it to the Lord and say: 'Lord, I am glad that You have come to dwell in me. How holy I ought to be; how different I ought to be! Lord, how I dislike this outward man, this self. I am glad that You are here.' All the credit, all the glory in any of our lives, is just due to His dwelling within. It is not how keen or how clever we are—nothing of that—but just the measure of Christ in us, by the Holy Spirit. How thankful we should be that there is something of the pure gold in this earthen vessel.

PENTECOST:

(3) GOD COMMITTING HIMSELF

The third thing about the significance of the Spirit's coming is this: it is God's committal of Himself. That is why we read those passages about

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

the fire. When Elijah prepared that altar on Mount Carmel and put the sacrifice upon it, he made them pour water over it, twelve barrels of water, until everything was drenched and the trenches round about were brimming over with water, so that it just could not ignite. Then he said: 'Now, Lord, show that You are God!' And the fire came down and consumed, not only the sacrifice, but also the stones, and the water, and everything! When God comes in, everything else has to go.

That was God committing Himself; it was God saying: 'Yes, I am with this'. Oh, that we knew more of the committal of God, more of God saying, 'Yes, I am with you! Yes, I am with this people!' But so often He has to stand back; we get a trickle when we ought to get a river; we get an ember when we ought to get a blazing fire. We think we are doing quite well to get a little flicker! It was not like this on Carmel with "the God of Elijah". Then all the people said: "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, *he is God*" (I Kings xviii. 39). You cannot argue when God comes in.

And that is what happened at Pentecost. Just as the fire fell in the case of Elijah's sacrifice, so on the day of Pentecost, "suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind.

and it filled all the house where they were sitting . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts ii. 2, 4). It was not some private affair; they were *all* filled. They were just where God came right in, and therefore they came into it too.

God committed Himself again when David made that sacrifice after the numbering of Israel. Interestingly enough, his sacrifice was on Mount Moriah (II Chron. iii. 1), where Abraham had offered a sacrifice centuries before. David got right with God, and God came in.

And then, I think it is very wonderful to note that when the glorious temple of Solomon was built and dedicated, God was not content with just the inauguration of the beautiful services in that wonderful building. He gave a special and signal mark of His approval and good pleasure, for, when Solomon had finished praying, He sent down fire from Heaven upon the sacrifices. It was as if God said, 'I am here now!' Moreover the fire followed the glory. The glory of the presence of God had flooded into that place, and the priests could do nothing; they had to go out (I Chron. v. 14). When God comes in, He says, 'I am going to do everything, so you will have to go out. There is no place for man, for I am here!' C. J. B. H.

(to be concluded)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

WHY THINGS GO WRONG

JACKSON Minor was bored. That was how it all began. He was bored, and the only answer he found for his boredom was mischief. Sundays were not often dull for him, for those were the days when the boys were allowed to go beyond the school bounds to roam among the woods and lanes of Sussex. But on this occasion it was too wet for walking, and there was little for him to do. He did not collect stamps or butterflies; he had already written home, and he had nothing special to read. What was a fellow to do on such a wet Sunday afternoon? The answer, as we have said, was mischief. It arose from Willis's suggestion that they should explore the Chapel Organ.

It needed a little care to slip into the Chapel without being seen, but they managed it all right, and made their way up the aisle to the large pipe organ near the pulpit. They dare not switch on a light, so they blundered about for a bit in the gloom, not quite knowing where to go, till they came upon a promising looking staircase. This, they soon found, led to the organ loft. This seemed a most interesting world, for they found themselves

surrounded by organ pipes of all sizes, not only the large ones they already knew by sight, but many medium sized and some quite small. Willis dared Jackson Minor to take out one of the smallest pipes and blow it. No sooner said than done! Then Willis himself took out a larger one and had a blow at that. They had quite a game, playing with the different pipes, until they felt Sunday was no longer boring but really very good fun.

Well, all fun must come to an end: so presently the two climbed down again, and were quite pleased with themselves when they were able to slip out into the cloisters without being seen. Yes, thought Jackson Minor, it had been quite a merry afternoon after all. During tea he was telling his special crony, Forbes, all about it, when he got rather a shock. For Forbes happened to say—What a lark it would be at Evening Chapel if the pipes had been put back in the wrong places! Jackson Minor laughed this off, but it quite spoiled the rest of his tea. He did not enjoy his cake at all, for by that time he had begun seriously to wonder whether after all they *had* put the pipes back

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

wrongly. By the time School Chapel started, he was so troubled by his guilty conscience that he almost expected to find that the organ would not play at all.

It played, all right, and to the rest of the school the Service seemed very much as usual. But not to the unhappy Jackson Minor. To him there seemed to be all sorts of wrong notes sounding. He saw two of the masters exchange glances, just as if they were wondering what had been done to the organ. He looked at the Headmaster. His face was very stern. Was he frowning at the false notes which were spoiling the hymn tunes? Was he—yes, Jackson Minor felt sure that he was—thinking of calling the whole school together to insist on the culprits owning up? He was so busy worrying about how the last hymn would sound that he hardly heard the sermon; and when the hymn was sung it sounded completely wrong—even to the ‘Amen’ at the end. He felt that he had never heard worse music. He had certainly never been so miserable at a Service.

The end of the story may sound rather tame. There was really nothing wrong with the music: there were no complaints at all from the Music Master who played the organ: and if the Head had been frowning at something, it certainly had

had nothing to do with organ pipes. The truth is, that what was wrong with that Service was not the music, but Jackson Minor’s own bad conscience; it was not any trouble with the organ, or with anything else outside him, but trouble in his own heart. Because his heart was wrong, everything outside seemed wrong. It is often like that with people. They wonder what is wrong with those around them, or complain about other things and people, whereas really it is their own spirit which is wrong. If that could be put right, all other cares would vanish.

Next time Jackson Minor went to Chapel it was quite different. He sang as cheerfully as usual, and thought that everything was pleasant and as it should be. This was not because the organ had been put right (for actually it was never wrong), but because his own heart was right once again. He had learned his lesson. It is a lesson which we all need to learn. If our hearts are wrong, then everything around seems wrong; but if our hearts are right, then we need not mind or fear the troubles round about us.

“ . . . fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord . . . ”
(1 Peter 3. 14, 15).
H. F.

JESUS I KNOW, AND PAUL I KNOW, BUT WHO ARE YE?

Acts xix. 15.

IT was the third missionary journey of Paul, and he suddenly came down from the upper country to the great city of Ephesus. The first thing that this man, Spirit-filled, did, was to enquire of the twelve men who composed the little church, whether they had “received the Holy Ghost”.

We may receive the Spirit of God in regeneration, but to have received the Spirit of God in regeneration does not at all exhaust the mighty office of the Holy Ghost. A man remains absolutely powerless unless he has received the unction of the Holy One.

There are four different planes of power—the lowest is the physical, above that is the mental, above that is the moral, and above all is the spiritual. It is only when the man moves on the spiritual level that he has power with God, and power over unclean spirits.

It is because too many ministers, and too many Christian workers to-day, are content to live upon the intellectual level, or upon the moral plane, that their work is impotent to touch the mighty strongholds of Satan.

The first question, therefore, to put to every

Christian worker is: On what level are you working, on what level are you living, on what level are you speaking? For if you are speaking on anything less than the spiritual level, know that your life will be largely a failure.

These twelve men gathered round the Apostle, were led by him, through Jesus Christ, to receive that same Spirit which descended upon Christ at His baptism, and upon the Church at Pentecost, and upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. The Spirit as at Pentecost, as at the first, descended upon the twelve men, and made a revolution.

Even the power of God working led to a great deal of disputing, and the Apostle was wise enough to feel that when disputing and argumentation arose, not through desire to know the truth, but from the desire to controvert it, there was no use wasting his time, and therefore, he separated himself and his disciples from the synagogue and carried on his work, “reasoning daily” in another place (Acts xix. 9, 10).

You are not surprised to learn that at that very moment, the descent of the Holy Spirit had stirred up evil spirits? Wherever in the world the Holy Spirit comes down in mighty power upon men, there is always an uprising of evil spirits to resist it.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

Some of you have never known much about the devil, because you did not know much about the Holy Ghost. You began to think that there is no devil at all. Why, there is no need for him to worry you. You don't hurt him! But if ever you begin to live by the power of the Holy Ghost, all hell will be arrested to stop you. So at Ephesus we are not surprised to learn that evil spirits began with increasing power to reveal themselves and their presence.

I suppose they had been there all the time, but they had not wakened up. Just as you may have a lot of "blue-bottles" in a window, but it is when the sun comes that they begin to buzz. So the very presence and power of God in these twelve men and others, stirred up an intense opposition on the part of these evil spirits whom Paul met in the Name of Jesus Christ.

When Paul spake, they knew that they must yield. For just as horses and dogs know when a masterful man comes, the demons know when a really spiritual man comes.

So great was Paul's success in dealing with evil spirits, by which the bodies and minds and souls of people were tormented and possessed, that a number of men who gained their living by pretending to, or actually exorcising demons, felt that their trade was in danger. And, as their own exorcism failed, they resolved to use, second-hand, the Name of Jesus, and said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."

They did not know Jesus themselves. They had no first hand knowledge of Christ, but they reflected Paul's power, as they hoped, by exorcising in the Name of Jesus, "whom Paul preacheth." But the demon said, "Jesus I know, Paul I know, but *who are ye?*" "You up-starts, I never heard of you before, I don't care for you; who are you?"

Now the demon said—speaking through the lips of this possessed man—"Jesus I know; Jesus I know." What the previous knowledge that evil spirit had of Jesus was, it is not for me to say, but I may go back to the first chapter of Mark, where we are told that when Jesus had cast out an evil spirit in a synagogue one Sabbath morning, the spirit said: "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

In that same chapter in Mark we are told that the Lord Jesus casting out demons that same Sabbath night, forbade them to speak, because they knew Him, as though He did not wish that they should tell all they knew, though they wanted to.

The fact is, that as Satan, in the book of Job, "considered Job"—"hast thou considered my servant Job?"—so evil spirits are always consider-

ing us; they are always taking our measure, they are always estimating what our piety, with all our talk, really amounts to. I suppose the demons talk us over pretty freely, and they pass on the information, and they say, "I saw that man do so-and-so; he is good spoil for us."

They considered Jesus. They had considered Him on the mount of temptation, and, whilst their great leader was dealing with Christ, there were, may be, tens of thousands of spirits waiting to see what Jesus would do. When Satan tempted Him to make the stones into bread, and with the vision of the world, and Jesus refused to throw Himself vaingloriously down from the pinnacle of the temple, all the demons, when the day was over, went home, saying, "We never saw the like of that."

They watched Him on the mount of transfiguration, when again the door of eternity was opened before Him, and He might have stepped into heaven without reproof, because He was the sinless and therefore the deathless Man. They noticed—though at that time Jesus might have passed away into the glory, for "instead of the joy" (for the Welsh Bible puts it so, and that is true to the Greek) "instead of the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross,"—now He took the road to Calvary. They watched Him, and made up their minds that He would not flinch, would not be attracted from His main purpose.

The garden of Gethsemane was almost darkened by evil spirits, by myriads of them, gathered there in the hour and power of darkness, to see "the prince of this world" in the last supreme conflict and duel with Christ.

They saw how, on the mount of temptation, Satan had tried to turn Him aside by attracting Him elsewhere to use His power; now Satan held up before Him the tree and agony and shame of the future, but they saw that Jesus flinched not. They heard Him say, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done"; and they said to one another, "It is all up, we cannot do anything with Him."

On the cross they watched Him die, as He led captivity captive, and exposed them openly. When they saw the evil principalities and powers bound to the chariot wheels of the ascending Christ, as He went home to the Father, they *knew* Him, they knew He was the triumphant, victorious Saviour. I have no wonder that this demon said: "Jesus I know; I know Him to be the Son of God."

Well, then, this demon went on to say: "*Paul I know.*" He knew him pretty intimately. He had known him when Paul was a "very respectable man," when the demons thought they could do

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

what they liked with him, and when he was doing their business. They had stood aghast when, upon the road to Damascus, the glorious Immanuel had stricken Paul to the ground, and suddenly Paul became a living and obedient servant.

They *knew* Paul: knew him in his boyhood, and in his manhood; they knew him in his conversion. They had watched him oft, as they watch us. They measured him, and they knew him.

They had watched him in his prayers. I think there is only one of the epistles of Paul in which he does not speak of his prayer-life. In nearly every one he talks about bending his knees to the Father.

Paul did more on his knees than he did with his pen. Paul did more by praying than we do by fussing. Paul did *WORK* on his knees. He knew how to pray. Paul's power in the world was really determined by his prayer. Yes, the demons had watched Paul pray. Every time they heard him pray I expect they got between him and the sun, and made a cloud, that it took Paul all his time to pray through. Oh, they saw that Paul would never take a denial. The more he was repressed the more he rebounded, and when he persevered in prayer he never stopped until he had won a victory.

This demon said: "I know Paul, I heard him praying. I never heard a man pray like that, and I know he is going to tackle me; I have no chance."

These demons knew also that Paul lived exercising himself to have a conscience void of offence against God or man. They knew that every night, before he went to bed, Paul sat down and went through the previous day, in order to see if any microbe of Satan's temptations had got into his blood. Any of us who know the devil, know that he never comes down upon us all at once. He generally puts a little microbe in us three days before the temptation comes off, and if you don't mark it with the disinfectant blood of Christ, he will have you three days after that. The demons had seen that Paul was up to their tricks.

These demons said: "We know that Paul is up to our tricks, because he exercises himself to have a conscience void of wrong before God and man. He keeps such short accounts." The man who pays cash, and keeps short accounts, gets off best. The demon knew this in Paul, and when he heard his command to "come out," he came out of the man.

It was otherwise when the seven men started on him. He turned on them, and said: "Yon little dwarfs, you Lilliputians, who are you? Who are you? I don't know you, I never heard about you before; your name has never been talked about down in hell. No one knows about you

outside this little bit of a place called Ephesus."

Aye, and there is the question that comes to us also: "Does anyone know of us down in hell?" Do the devils know about us? Are they scared about us? Are they frightened by us? or do they turn upon us?

There were two men, the Greek says, who tried to get this evil spirit out of this man, and the spirit said, "I don't know you; I am not going to come out for you, not likely. Let Paul come along, I will come out; but I am not going to come out for *you*. Who are you?"

And he not only did that (the Greek word is very strong) "he *mastered* them." That is, one spirit mastered two men. This one spirit could have mastered not only two but the seven sons of Sceva, all of them. It reminds you of what took place at the foot of the mountain. When Jesus Christ came down from the mountain of transfiguration He found a whole crowd of people arguing with the apostles. There was a demoniac son, and, running to Jesus, the father said: "I brought my son to Thy disciples, but they could not cast him out." And Jesus said, "O ye of little faith." He cast the demon out, and then He said, "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting."

Men and women, this is it: it is a remarkable thing that through the Bible much of the evil of the world is attributed to the action of evil spirits. It is they who govern the darkness of this dark world. And these evil spirits are all around us, in society, in our own family, in that drunkard's son, in that girl who seems to be possessed with the spirit of pollution, in these young souls that seem sometimes as though fascinated, turned away from God, and made stolid, so hard, so indifferent; "the spirit that worketh in the sons of disobedience."

It seems to me that one must get back, and say, "God help me, I am going to get victory over Satan in my own life, I am going to turn from Satan every stronghold on which he can stand, I am going to get so full of the grace of God that the devil cannot get at me." As the negro man said, "When the devil comes to me I introduce him to his Master."

And then, it seems to me, we have got to get back to prayer. Oh, God forgive us for our prayerlessness. Oh, friends, it is easy to say "Amen," but God knows what a prayerless lot we are. We are a prayerless lot. I do not wonder at things being as they are. God forgive me if I have spoken hardly. I want to learn the secret of binding the devil, and I want, for the last few years at least, my name to be feared in hell.

F. B. MEYER.

(Notes of an address. Not revised by the speaker.)

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1957

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTE REGARDING RECEIPTS

The British postal authorities have now so much increased the postage rates that we find it exceedingly expensive to send receipts to all the friends who send money. Will you please allow us to acknowledge in this general way in the magazine, and should you fail to trace your own item, please let us know.

EDITOR

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during August and September, 1957. Abaiyat, Sudan £1; Aberdare £1; Auckland, New Zealand £1; Belfast 10s., £1, £2; Bergen, Norway 14s.; Berlin, Germany 19s., 19s.; Bickley £1; Birmingham 11s. 4d; Bloemendaal, Holland £1; Brisbane, Australia £1; Burnley 2s. 6d; Chichester 10s.; Christchurch, New Zealand 10s.; Copenhagen, Denmark 10s.; Crawley 10s., 10s., 10s.; Dowlais 5s.; Englehart, Canada 15s.; Eston, Canada £6 2s. 6d; Ewell 13s. 5d; Falmouth 4s. 3d; Giessen, Holland 18s. 9d; Glasgow £1, £1, £1; Guildford £1; Hanover, Germany £1; Hastings £3; Heemstede, Holland 10s.; Hemsedal, Norway £1; Hirwaun 3s. 5d, £1; Hull 10s.; Ipswich £1; Kew £1 5s.; Kristiansand, Norway £2 10s.; Leicester £1; London N.6—10s.; N.W.10—10s.; S.E.9—5s.; S.E.18—2s., 2s. 6d, £1; S.E.22—14s.; S.E.23—10s., £1, £1, £1; S.E.26—£1; S.W.18—10s.; W.C.1—£2 2s.; Los Angeles, California £4 17s.; Lostock £1 1s.; Mansfield £1; Melbourne, Australia £1 10s.; Montrose £2;

Moulsford £2; Neath 5s.; Neutral Bay, Australia £2; Newcastle-on-Tyne 8s. 8d, 10s., £1; Oberhausen, Germany 10s.; Oceanside, California £1 1s. 2d; Ootacamund, India £100; Orpington 5s.; Oslo, Norway £1, £2 10s.; Portsmouth £1; Quantico, Virginia £5 6s. 5d, £3 10s. 11d; Reconvilier, Switzerland £1 12s. 5d, £1 12s. 7d; Ridgewood, New Jersey 8s. 2d; Southampton 10s.; South Shields 5s.; Strasbourg, France £1; Taipei, Formosa £1 10s.; Tonbridge £3; Toronto, Canada £1; Torrington 10s.; Trelewis 10s., £2; Tunbridge Wells £1 1s.; Welling 7s. 5d; Wembley Park 5s.; Wheaton, Illinois £8 16s. 1d; Winchester 5s.; Woking 10s.; Wolverton £1; Worthing 10s., 10s.
Total £210 16s. 6d

Atco, N.J. \$5; Baldwin Park, Calif. \$5; Brussels, Belgium \$5; Catasauqua, Pa. \$1; Citrus Heights, Calif. \$5; Detroit, Mich. \$10; Eddystone, Pa. \$7; Harrison, Maine \$10; Lansdowne, Pa. \$3.50; Louisville, Ky. \$15, \$5; Monrovia, Calif. \$3; Monrovia, Liberia \$1; Nyack, N.Y. \$5; Orlando, Fla. \$1; Oskaloosa, Iowa \$2; Ouango, French Equatorial Africa \$10; San Francisco, Calif. \$3; San Gabriel, Calif. \$1; Temple City, Calif. \$3; West Branch, Mich. \$1.
Total \$101.50

Copenhagen D.Kr. 20.00; Hjørring 30.00; Holte 50.00; Odense 30.00.
Total D. Kr. 130.00

Kirchheim, Germany D M. 10.00

Basle Sw. Frs. 20.00; Berne 5.00; Ennetbaden 5.00; Glarus 30.00, 10.00; Grosshochstetten 50.00; Liestal 10.00; Münsingen 20.00; Neuchâtel 10.00; Schiers 10.00. Total Sw. Frs. 170.00

THE NEXT

SPECIAL GATHERINGS

at Honor Oak

will be held, the Lord willing, on

SATURDAY, January 4, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, Jan. 5, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

A NEW BOOK FOR THE CHILDREN

BURIED TREASURE

(And other stories for Boys and Girls)

by H. F.

48 pp. Illustrated. Price: 2/- (In U.S.A. \$0.43)

Postage 4d. (In U.S.A. 4 cents)

The wording of the **1958 MOTTO** is as follows:

“FEAR THOU NOT” “I have CHOSEN thee” “I am WITH thee” “I will STRENGTHEN thee” “I will HELP thee” “I will UPHOLD thee”
Isa. xli. 9, 10

Large: 5d. each (4/6d. a dozen)

Postage and Packing: 1 to 3—4d.; 4 to 6—5d.; on 12—8d.

Small: 3d. each (2/6d. a dozen)

Postage and Packing: 1 to 12—2d.; 13 to 36—4d.

WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

By T.A-S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY	5/6 (\$1.18)
WHAT IS MAN?	5/- (\$1.07)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL I)	2/6 (\$0.53)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION	2/6 (\$0.53)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS	1/- (\$0.21)
GOD HATH SPOKEN	1/- (\$0.21)
IN CHRIST	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL	3d (\$0.05)
VISION AND VOCATION	2d (\$0.04)
SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE HOUSE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
UNION WITH CHRIST IN CONSECRATION	2d (\$0.04)
THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN LIFE	2d (\$0.04)
THE MEASURE OF CHRIST	2d (\$0.04)
THE CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD	2d (\$0.04)
THE BLOOD, THE CROSS AND THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS	2d (\$0.04)
THE SERVICE OF GOD	2d (\$0.04)
ON KNOWING THE LORD	2d (\$0.04)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN	2d (\$0.04)
ATTAINING UNTO THE FIRST THREE	2d (\$0.04)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

<i>(The Zero hour of the Creation)</i>	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF	1d (\$0.02)
WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?	3d (\$0.05)
	2/6 a dozen (\$0.53)
THE GOD OF THE AMEN	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD <i>(For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated)</i>	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC <i>(For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated)</i>	5/- (\$1.07)

By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
STANDING WITH THEM	1d (\$0.02)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

READY FOR THE KING

<i>(For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated)</i>	1/6d (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH <i>(For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated)</i>	2/- (\$0.43)

By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE <i>(The Way of Salvation)</i>	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST	9d (\$0.16)

By W.N.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE	3d (\$0.05)
WASTE!	2d (\$0.04)

By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF	2d (\$0.04)
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (CONSECRATION)	2d (\$0.04)
	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

THIS MINISTRY

(Series of Messages given at Honor Oak)

Volume II.	9d (\$0.16)
Volume III.	1/- (\$0.21)

POSTAGE AND PACKING. For postage and packing please add the following to the total amount of the books ordered :

	In the United Kingdom.	Elsewhere (except U.S.A. & Canada)
Single copies of booklets price 4d and under	2d	1½d
Single copies of booklets price 6d to 9d	4d	2d
Single copies of booklets price 1/- to 1/6	6d	3d
<i>Otherwise:—</i>		
Orders totalling less than 5/- please add	4d in the shilling	2d in the shilling
Orders totalling between 5/- and £2 please add	2d in the shilling	1d in the shilling
Orders totalling more than £2 please add	2/- in the £	1/- in the £

In U.S.A. and Canada.

Single copies of booklets price \$0.30 and under please add 2 cents. Otherwise please add 4 cents in the dollar.

Enquiries for literature should be addressed to THE EDITOR, A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY, 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23.

Literature may be obtained from:—In U.S.A.—Almquist Christian Book Nook, 330, Division Street, Northfield, Minnesota or Westmoreland Avenue Chapel, 1505, South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles 6, California.—In India—Dr. A. I. Kinnear, 6, Brunton Road, Bangalore 1, or from Evangelical Literature Service (Mr. Donald J. David), 1/38, Vepey High Road, Madras 3.

THE GUEST HOUSE exists for the accommodation of those of the Lord's people who desire to come for *the value of the spiritual ministry* of the Centre.

It is available for this purpose throughout the year.

The limited amount of accommodation makes prolonged visits very difficult and such need to have special consideration.

Those who are interested at any time should make application to Mr. or Mrs. A. G. TAYLOR, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23. Telephone: FORest Hill 4609.