



Volume 82 No.2 MELBOURNE, APRIL/JUNE 1999 THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Under the reign of sin and death there is now a "broad road" in which, under the tendency of the world, the flesh, and the devil, almost all mankind are walking in a greater or less degree of selfishness and gratification of the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Its grade is downward and away from God. Its end is death, in just harmony with the original sentence of sin in Eden. On it none can retrace his steps so as to return to God. He may stop for a time, or even attempt to return, but the grade is too steep, and the influence and pressure of the crowd irresistible; and soon he is on the downward course again – moving slowly or swiftly. But there is a way of life into which the pilgrim may turn. Of it our Lord said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life". There is, consequently only one way of return, through acceptance of Christ and obedience testifying thereto. Its gate is Faith, and at present it is a very difficult road to travel, even after it is found.

NARROW IS THE WAY

This gate and way have been open for over nineteen centuries (John 14:6). Comparatively few of the race have even seen or known of this path, for we are authoritatively informed that "few there be that find it". And the reason for this is given – "the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them that believe not lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them" – 2 Cor. 4:4. Here is a marvellous thing. Why does the God of Love make the way of life so obscure that only a small portion of the race have any opportunity of even knowing it? – and so narrow and rugged that when found many are so discouraged with the prospect that they make but little effort to walk therein, and gradually drift back again into the general current of the broad road?

From the ordinary standpoint – the world's standpoint of human speculation – there is no reasonable answer to this question. But from the standpoint of the Divine Plan of the Ages, as revealed in the Scriptures, there is a very satisfactory answer.

The answer is that God's purpose of mercy respecting the world (which entered the "broad road" through Adam's transgression and sentence) is to deal with it as a whole; to let all have an experience with the wages of sin (death), and then, through Christ, to end the reign of sin and death under Satan and inaugurate a reign of Righteousness and Life under Christ, the Kingdom of God. Thus seen, the "narrow way" now open (which only a few see, and which but a "little flock" walk in faithfully when they do find it) is not meant to be the way of life for the race in general. It is provided only for a special class called variously in Scripture – "The Church of Christ", "The Bride", "the Temple of the Living God", "the Elect", "the Body of Christ", the "little flock" to which it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. The gate of Faith is made obscure to ensure that those who enter shall be faithful. The way is rugged and difficult to ensure that all who continue in that way faithful to the end shall be "overcomers", shall be of strong character.

The special service for which these are being selected demands that they shall be tried as gold is purified in the furnace of discipline, that they may be found vessels unto honour and meet for the Master's use, when His time shall come for them with their Lord and Redeemer as "the seed of Abraham" to extend the blessing of God to all the families of the earth (dead as well as the living) – Gal. 3:16. 29 – and when they, with Him, shall be the kings and priests unto God, who shall reign on the earth during the Millennial Age to bind Satan's power (Rev. 5:10, 20:1-3) and to open the eyes of those whom he has so long blinded and deceived. By these God will prepare a favourable way for all. – Isa. 62:10.

A HIGHWAY SHALL BE THERE

When our Redeemer shall have taken to Himself His great power and established His Kingdom – after the last member of "the Church, which is His body", shall have been perfected and glorified with the Head upon

the throne (Rev. 11:17; 3-21) –after the great time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation shall have swept away present institutions, and humbled the pride of man in the dust, and brought the world into a teachable attitude, then the broad road to death will be abolished. Instead, the way to death (second death), thereafter will be hedged about and made narrow, and difficult, by reason of the speedy and just retribution which then will promptly follow every attempted violation of Immanuel’s laws. The narrow way to immortal life will also have terminated, having served its purpose by selecting the “little flock”.

Then Satan will be bound (restrained from deceiving mankind) and “the world” will be forced to respect the laws and Kingdom of God. The “flesh”, the weaknesses men labour under as the result of the fall, will alone stand between man and perfect happiness – and full arrangements are provided by the Mediator-King for assisting the fallen flesh back to perfection. The way of life will then be a Highway, cleared of every impediment –the Millennial Kingdom will at first make the road to death difficult (to ensure that only the wilful shall go by it into the second death), and the same Kingdom arrangements will make the way to life easy of access, and its name, correspondingly, will no longer be the Narrow Way, but the King’s Highway of Holiness, leading to life everlasting, and open to all who desire righteousness – John 10:16.

As the Prince of Darkness (Satan) rules now over the Broad Road, and its blinded millions whom he leads downward to death, so there the Prince of Light will rule over mankind, for whom He will open up the Highway of Holiness, upon which millions will go upward to life eternal. It is as a means to this end that He is selecting His Church, is causing the great trouble to come upon the world, and will shortly bind Satan for the thousand years of reign. More than this, He will open the blinded eyes that all may see the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord – 2 Cor. 4:6. Not only will men learn unquestionably that Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; but more, they will see and feel the restitution work begun in themselves and in their fellows. – Acts 3:19-21; Ezek. 16:48-50, 53-55, 60-63.

Sickness and pain and all diseases will yield to the power of the great Physician upon the throne; and He will not permit death to befall any except those who shall intelligently and wilfully refuse His offers of full restitution by rejecting the terms of obedience required under the New Covenant. Even these shall be liberally dealt with, for our Lord willeth not the death of him that dieth, but would rather that all should turn unto Him and live. Accordingly, while all will be forced to “bow” in at least outward recognition of that kingdom, yet their wills must remain their own, and their progress in restitution beyond the common advantages will depend upon their willingness or unwillingness to come into accord with that Kingdom and its righteous arrangements. Concerning these, we are expressly told by the Prophet that, if still sinners when a hundred years old, they will be cut off (in the second death, destruction from which there is to be no ransom, no resurrection).

THE LAW OF THE LORD

But although the condition of things in that age will differ greatly from present conditions, yet the law of God, like Himself, changes not; it is merely the conditions that will have changed. God’s law when exercised by our Lord Jesus and His Church, and tempered with mercy will be the same law in every particular that it always has been. It cannot change, for the same reasons, and to change it in any degree would be to make it imperfect. That law is Love. Full obedience to it means perfect love – controlling every thought, word and deed; partial obedience means a measure of love.

At the beginning of that new era the world in general will be loveless as at present, controlled instead by selfishness; for the heart of the natural (fallen) man is enmity against this law of God, which represents God’s character. When present-day selfishness shall have blossomed and gone to seed in the great time of trouble now impending, it will become apparent to all that, however selfish their hearts may be, their deeds must thereafter conform more closely to the principle of love-doing to others as they would have others do to them. It will thus be a practical lesson that the New King will introduce by the Law of His Kingdom. Then loving deeds and words will be made compulsory upon all, though their hearts (wills) may still be tainted with selfishness; for God does not now, and never will, force the wills of His creatures.

But perfect obedience in letter and spirit will not be realised by the world then on trial until the close of the Messianic age, for perfection of being is necessary to a perfection of obedience, and that entire age will be necessary to the full restitution or bringing back of such as accept the Son to the perfection and divine fellowship lost six thousand years ago. Such as thus believe the Son, accept of His grace, and are conformed to His image, and such only shall see life in the full and absolute sense and be presented unto the Father perfect and unreprouvable in love, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom, having thus accomplished the work begun by Him three thousand years before, when He bought the world with His own life, that He might give life unto all them that obey Him.

At present there are “stumbling stones” to faith in the “narrow way” to test the faithful in trust and

endurance, and there are “lions” of opposition to threaten and to turn back discouraged all except the “peculiar” people whom the Lord is now selecting for the particular work of the future, as his Bride; but of the King’s Highway it is declared, “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast”; and the stumbling stones shall all be gathered out, mountains of difficulty shall be levelled, and valleys of despair and discouragement shall be filled up, that the King’s Highway may be most favourable; that all the Redeemed of the Lord (who will accept the gift of life upon the conditions of its offer) may go up thereon to perfection. – Isa.35:8-10; 62:10: 40:4,5.

It will thus be seen that the human family will be gradually restored to a condition of perfection such as was lost by father Adam. As already shown, this will be accomplished by a course of judgments (disciplines) which will enforce an observance of righteousness. There will then be a short period of testing at the end of the Messianic reign, during which time Satan is to be loosed for a season. This will finally determine who are at heart lovers of righteousness and truly loyal to God and who have simply conformed to the kingdom requirements because it was easier to do right and paid better. The wicked will then go down into the second death, while the righteous will be rewarded with Eternal Life. – Matt.25 (PP1/20).

“Walk in Newness of Life”

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” – 2 Cor. 5:17.

Throughout the inspired Word of God mankind 1 as a race are represented as dead – dead in trespasses and sins, dead in Adam, alienated from God through wicked works. Only those who have fled for refuge to the cross of Christ are ever spoken of as having life in God’s sight. These have passed from death unto life through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and consecration to Him, and according to the above text and many others of a similar kind, those thus passed from death in Adam to life in Christ are now to be considered as living a new life. Of a life so altered in the matter of relationship to God as well as in all other aspects, it can be truly said “all things are become new.” Thus in another text we have the same Apostle telling us “that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” – Rom.6:4.

There is nothing ambiguous about such texts. The natural man, living under the condemnation of death, and following the downward bent of the fallen, fleshly mind, is sensual, inherently sinful, dead. But the one who has turned from sin, and by faith in Christ found peace and forgiveness at the mercy-seat of God, has thereby experienced something so far-reaching in its possibilities of relationship to God, to eternal life, and to present resurrection influences, that the contrasts of life and death used by the Apostle in these Scriptures become clear and forceful illustrations of this most important teaching of the New Testament.

In fact, this form of illustrating the state of those who are in harmony with God and those who are at enmity with Him, is a prominent feature of our Lord Jesus’ own teaching. “Let the dead bury their dead”, is His clear conception of those out of relationship with God. Then in contrast, speaking of those who had entered the way of life, He said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” And to this might be added the testimony of the Apostle John, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” – Matt. 8:22; John. 3:36; 1 John 5:12.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

It is manifestly important then that we note very closely the language used in our text. We observe that Paul is careful to tell us that it is only to such as are “in Christ,” that old things have passed away and to whom all things are become new. The words “in Christ” place a very particular emphasis on the fact that much more than a belief in Christ and His sacrifice is necessary to an enjoyment of these “new creature” privileges. It is not “If any man believe in Christ,” but “If any man be in *Christ*.” This distinction is ever a characteristic of the Word of God. The word of Christ may indeed be received and believed as truth by the simple processes of intellectual powers possessed, but the Scriptural emphasis is always placed on the deeper receptivity and response of the heart affections. “That on the good ground,” Jesus said, “are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” – Luke 8:15.

We cannot be surprised, therefore to find that throughout the entire Bible God puts so much emphasis on the depth of heart soil we display, and on the depth of heart devotion and receptivity we manifest. As He said to Israel of old, so He continues to say to all who profess faith in Him, or claim any special relationship to Him, “The Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 13:3). This is the distinction intended in our text where being “in Christ” is the imperative requirement laid down by the Apostle.

What does it mean to be “in Christ”? It means that we have found the “new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (Heb. 10:20). It means that by the exercise of

faith in the atoning work of Christ we have now been “quickened together with him”, and henceforth our “life is hid with Christ in God.” This, then, is how believers are united to Christ and can know that they are “in Christ”. The two important steps into this relationship are clearly stated by Paul: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” (Rom. 6:8; Col. 3:1). Thus it is through death that we enter the sphere of new creature life—through faith in the atonement secured by the death of Jesus, and then by virtue of our baptism into death with him, we are raised to “walk in newness of life.”

“It is in the power of a new life that believers are united to Christ. They were dead in sin, and He, in perfect grace, came down, and, though Himself pure and sinless, was ‘made sin’ – ‘died unto sin’—put it away – rose triumphant over it and all pertaining to it, and, in resurrection, became the Head of a new race. Adam was the head of the old creation, which fell with him. Christ, by dying, put Himself under the full weight of His people’s condition, and having perfectly met all that was against them, rose, victorious over all, and carried them with Him into the new creation of which He is the glorious Head and Centre. Hence, we read, ‘He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.’ (1 Con 6:17). ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’ (Eph. 2:4-6). ‘Tor we are members of his body.’ (Eph. 5:30). ‘And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.’ (Col. 2:13). Thus we are constituted alive “in Christ”.

LIVING AS NEW CREATURES

In the regeneration process by which God’s new creation is developed, they are, by an act of pure grace, planted in Christ, and thus like the branches in the vine, they are constantly partaking of the sap and strength of Christ the Vine; therefore the life of Christ becomes increasingly manifest in them. The evidences of spiritual life must become sufficiently marked in the daily conduct as to give a real corroboration to a profession of relationship to Christ. This is made clear by the statement of Scripture: “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit...Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his”. (Rom. 8:5, 9). These texts cover two important facts of Christian life. They very clearly point out our privileged and blessed standing in justification by faith, that is, our reckoned righteousness before God because we are now in Christ Jesus, and they also show that because we are thus complete in him, and recipients of the Holy Spirit in its creative power, the mind and character of Christ should, indeed must, characterise our daily life.

In this new life, according to yet another text, there is a renewing or transforming work at once begun, for so we read: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2). This requires, therefore, that in this new creature life, new hopes, new visions, new purposes, new habits of thought and an entirely new point of concentration will now control such a consecrated individual.

What will that point of concentration be? Surely it will be perfect harmony with God’s purpose for us, which is that we should be conformed to the image of His beloved Son. Then it must follow that henceforth only that which definitely contributes to the development of Christ in the heart, and only that which is conducive to increasing spirituality, will interest and occupy the truly grateful believer. Under no other condition of mind and heart would it be true testimony to claim that old things had indeed passed out of the life. Then along with those new hopes, desires etc., will come a greatly changed attitude of mind toward things in general, such as trials, environments, and our contacts with seemingly adverse circumstances.

Among the physical defects to which men and women are heir, there is what is known as colour-blindness. In the spiritual life there is an alarming possibility of a moral colour-blindness, against which Jesus uttered his words so full of deep significance: “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.” (Luke 11:34). Certainly no one can live the new life in Christ until the divine Oculist has trained the moral eyesight to see the fine distinctions by which God discovers the single eye.

In the character of God there are righteous standards, firm and absolute, without shadow of turning; therefore the newness of life set before the follower of Christ, and the strong and admirable life, is the life that is keen to respond to this vision of God’s character. In the life of Jesus on earth there were many admirable qualities of character displayed, but pre-eminent place is given to His hatred of sin and His love of righteousness. Thus it is written of Him, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hatred iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Heb 1:9). Living as new creatures in Christ requires this same uncompromising love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

The reader of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Church must be struck with the seeming contradictions in several of his statements. In chapter 1:4, 5, we read: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace

of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.” Then while he is yet practically in the introduction of the letter, he is chiding them because of “contentions” among them, factional disputes, some saying “I am of Paul”; others, “I am of Apollos”; and others, “I am of Cephas.” Then in chapter 3, verse 1, he writes, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”. What a paradox these statements appear to be! But herein lies the lesson for us. Paul certainly recognises these brethren as being new creatures in Christ, for he addresses them as saints or new creatures in Christ, but he very plainly tells them they are failing to live as becomes such.

The Apostle can thank God that they are “enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge,” but he must, nevertheless, lament the inconsistency of their conduct. What pained the heart of Paul was that while they were enriched in knowledge, they had not entered into the truth in real spiritual power, in such a way as to really possess it and be possessed by it. He had wanted them to get hold not only of the letter but also of the spirit of the knowledge by which they had been enriched. He wanted them to understand that only the spiritually minded really possess the truth, and that if they would live as new creatures in Christ, the Holy Spirit must have free course in their lives in order to elevate them into the higher realms of maturity. He laboured to show them that being conversant with the letter did not in itself indicate real spirituality.

An able writer has well said: “Spiritual knowledge is not deep thought, but living contact, entering into and being united to the truth as it is in Jesus, a spiritual reality, a substantial existence. The spirit teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual; into a spiritual mind it works spiritual truth. It is not the power of intellect, it is not even the earnest desire to know the truth (though this must be present), that fits one for the spirit’s teaching; it is a life yielded to it in waiting dependence and full obedience to be made spiritual, that receives the spiritual wisdom and understanding. In the mind these two elements, the moral and the cognitive, are united; only as the former has precedence and sway, can the latter apprehend what God has spoken.

“It is easy to understand how a carnal or fleshly life with its walk, and the fleshly mind with its knowledge, act and react on each other. As far as we are giving way to the flesh, we are incapable of receiving spiritual insight into truth. We may ‘know all mysteries, and have all knowledge,’ without love, the love which the spirit works in inner life, this is only a knowledge that puffeth up, it profiteth nothing. *The carnal life makes the knowledge carnal.* And this knowledge again, being thus held in the fleshly mind, strengthens the religion of the flesh, of self-trust and self-effort; the truth so received has no power to renew and make free. No wonder that there is so much Bible teaching and Bible knowledge, with so little of real, spiritual result in a life of holiness. Would God that His word might sound through his Church: ‘Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal? Unless we be living spiritual lives, full of humility, and love, and self-sacrifice, spiritual truth, the truth of God cannot profit us.’”

Surely if we thus “live by the spirit” and “walk by the spirit”, in faith and obedience, we may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will do its complete, transforming work in us. We can rest in the faith that the Spirit will impact sufficient strength to live as becometh new creatures in Christ, working in us to will and to do all that is pleasing in the sight of God. It is the rich possession of the Holy Spirit that makes and marks the spiritual man or woman.

OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY

In thinking of the “old things” which the Apostle tells us are to pass out of the new creature life, we realise there are many. We may think of the gross sins and weaknesses spoken of as “the works of the flesh and the devil,” but for the present it will be helpful to examine another line of old things which must pass away through the operation of the Word and Spirit of God in our hearts now, or pass away in the fire which shall burn eventually, utterly consuming all that is “wood, hay, and stubble”. The life of the Christian is represented in the Scriptures under the metaphor of a building. This illustration suggests the idea of a slow, continuous process, a laying of stone on stone until the structure is complete.

Into this structure may be built “gold, silver, precious stones,” or “wood, hay, stubble”. Sooner or later the material with which we have built will be subjected to the test of fire, “the day shall declare it.” This symbol of fire is but the Bible way of stating that a searching revealing, testing, and destructive judgment will one day come upon all that is not of the gold, silver, and precious stones character. Whatever will abide in this test will be of permanent quality – it shall not pass away; but all that is not of this enduring quality will be utterly destroyed in that day of the revealing fire. The Lord will judge his people. He is judging them now. Christ is now coming in to judge, and when He comes into a life to judge it, light comes in with Him, and that light is pouring in upon the actions and inner life of all who are before His judgment seat. This is the solemn word of Scripture: “I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works...He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.” – Rev. 2:23, 29.

What then are our works – how have we built? Have we been building on Christ, in Him, and...for Him? Have we built for His searching eye so faithfully that we shall not be ashamed before Him? Have the old

things passed away under the power of the Holy Spirit's daily effective work in the heart through the passing years, or will they still remain to pass away in the fire which shall try every one's work of what sort it is. How evident it is that in this revealing fire one class of service, of teaching, and one kind of life, will be brightened and beautified and glorified; and another class of such things will be destroyed and burned up. The gold and silver and costly stones will be glorified and heightened in beauty by being brought into this contact with the hand and heat of the Refiner and His furnace, while the other will be proved to be so mixed with the old things as to merit destruction.

What will the day declare for each of us? How many surprises will there be – both among the workers whose building will abide the fire, and also among those whose works must perish in the flame! Well may we each ask ourselves, how much of our life work will be wiped out of existence; crushed into nonentity, and made as if it had never been at all? Whatever in our conduct has been acceptable to God, we are assured will last. It will last in the mind of our heavenly Father, and it will last in glorious results to ourselves, because it will be in accord with the perfect will of God, which is the first great permanent reality in the universe. Because He abides for ever, so will that in us which has glorified Him abide forever. May we then be more and more able to affirm with the Apostle, "old things *are* passed away."

Happy indeed are they who really know that they are "walking in newness of life." To know that there has been a complete separation from the pursuits and attractions of the flesh, and a new point of concentration permanently fixed in the life, the new creature life, is to know the blessed testimony of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and heirs of eternal life with Christ our Lord. And so, possessed as we can be by new hopes, new visions, new aspirations, a new life in Christ, how comforting are the assurances of the Scriptures which teach us that God really gives us this high and perfect standing faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

ALL THINGS BECOME NEW

No doubt the poorest building on the foundation rock will have something in it that will remain after the fire of trial has done its work because it is on that Rock. But it is for us as true believers to cherish the noblest hopes and objectives. There is nothing new in seeking to be but "a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord." It is proper enough to say with David that I would "rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," but it is much more proper for new creatures in Christ to conform their aspirations and expectations to the revealed will of God. And those who gain this true outlook will ever be seeking for higher and higher attainments in Christian character.

So let us build on the foundation other than which no man can lay, the gold and silver and precious stones, things which are eternally new – true thoughts and holy deeds, loving, pure, unselfish, Christ-like and permanent materials. Let us give all diligence to add to our faith whatsoever things are lovely, ennobling, things which never grow old nor pass away, because they originate in God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, ever new and unchanging. Then we shall not be "saved so as by fire" but by grace divine an entrance shall be ministered unto us "abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (J.J.B. 49)

"Power for Service"

"The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people." (Psa 68:35)

Whatever our abilities, we are unfit for God's service until He consecrates our power to His service. Until we receive this divine power, His Spirit, we have no power for any spiritual work – however small or humble. We seldom realise this weakness. Consequently, it is not our weakness which is our greatest hindrance. Our imagined strength inhibits our service to God. Every time we depend upon our wisdom, ability, intellect, or our power to argue and convince, we ignore a fundamental truth: "...our *sufficiency is of God*" (2 Cor.3:5).

When a ship has run aground, its own power is futile for moving it. Actually, rather than helping, its own power is apt to strain and damage the vessel. What then? The ship must await God's power: the power of the rising tide. This great force will easily accomplish what human engineering could not. This is a parable of human helplessness waiting for divine power. Our powers can be used by God, but only when we think nothing of them. When we surrender ourselves to the Divine power we can be used as God wills. Then we can be content to be despised, if by that despising He will be glorified.

CAUSES OF INSUFFICIENCY

It may be said that our insufficiency is threefold. We are not still enough for God to come to us. We are not empty enough for God to fill us. We are not sanctified enough for God to use and honour us.

Two metaphors show this clearly. One of these likens the action of the Holy Spirit upon us to the falling of the dew. The other likens the Christian to a clay pot made by the Lord, to be filled by the Lord, and used as the Lord may choose.

We need to be still in order for God to come to us. The influence of the Holy Spirit falls upon our life as the dew falls in the stillness of the night upon the drooping plant. The plant cannot make the dew; it can only wait for it and attract it. The dew is always near, suspended in the atmosphere. But the dew does not fall unless two conditions prevail. The air must be still and the plant must be cool.

We still need stillness in our heart if the grace of the Spirit is to revive us. The feverish heat of life must also abate for the blessed baptism, giving power from on high to descend upon the still, cool heart.

Again, we need to be empty in order for God to fill us. Paul describes the idea of true Christian character as "... a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and men for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work:" (2 Tim.2:21). The metaphor tells of the dignity to which we are called – to be honourable vessels. It tells us what our service is to be – prepared for good works. But what it tells also deflates our pride and misplaced self-sufficiency –we are only vessels. God formed us as it pleases Him. He uses us as it pleases Him. We have nothing. We are His vessels for receiving, carrying, and distributing that with which He fills us.

NOT ALWAYS EMPTIED OF SELF

It often happens that we are not satisfied with being just this, and nothing more. We are not always emptied of self so that the Master may put into us what He wills. It is honourable to be vessels in His hand. It is a marvellous grace that we who were vessels of wrath (Rom.9:22) can be transformed into vessels of mercy (vs. 23), and then to make these into vessels of honour which will be fit for the noblest use – to carry grace to other lives.

Do we realise that we are only vessels to be employed in different ways, some to more usefulness than others, some constantly in use, others only occasionally? All of them are empty vessels until He fills them, vessels to be used by Him in any way that He thinks best, or to be laid aside upon the shelf if they are of no present use. Do we always agree to this? Are we sometimes willing to be used, but only if He makes us great enough to satisfy our ideas or only if He will fill us with some aromatic spice instead of mere water? Are we willing to be used in the meaner ways? To be used in ways which do not bring glory to ourselves?

We need to be holy enough for God to honour us. Honourable vessels are sanctified vessels –purged from evil and dedicated to His service. This is the most essential characteristic. How can the Lord of purity use unclean vessels when He wants the vessel to carry the pure water of life (Rev.22:17) to some thirsty soul, or the wine of the kingdom (Luke 22:18) to some fainting heart?

A SINGLE UNCONTROLLED DESIRE

The measure of our Christian power is the measure of Christian dedication. A single desire which has not been put away, (whether of the flesh or of the spirit), a single besetting sin which we tolerate to exist in our lives will hinder our usefulness to God, even though we are vessels of the finest craftsmanship and ornamentation.

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner" (Prov. 25:4) is one of Solomon's sayings. Its spiritual application extends deep. Does it not mean, "Take away all conscious defilement from soul and life, and then, as hallowed vessels, God will be able to use you for His praise?" It was a law for ancient Israel that they should "...bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." (Isa 66:20). If the vessel was unclean, it was a vessel "...wherein is no pleasure" (Hos. 8:8), and the offering contained within would not be accepted. That law has never been removed from the statute book of Christ.

These are some of God's answers to our questions about our insufficiency in service. They both rebuke and stimulate us when we listen to them in the secret place – for there only can they be heard. At such a time Saul of Tarsus was deep in self-condemnation and despair. He had been emptied of all self-sufficiency. Then the Lord said, through Ananias, "*he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*" (Acts. 9:15). If we could only begin by emptying ourselves of self as did Paul, might we not end where he did too. "...filled with the Holy Spirit". (Acts. 13:9). (The Herald).

"That Great Shepherd of the Sheep"

(Hebrews 13:20)

Isa. 40:11; He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

John 10:14,15: I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The first martyr in the sacred annals was a shepherd. All the patriarchs were shepherds. The confession of the sons of Jacob to the king of Egypt was, "Thy servants are shepherds." Moses, the sublimest historian and lawgiver of the world, was a shepherd. David, the poet-king of Israel, the founder of the Hebrew monarchy, and the central figure in the history of the sacred people, was a keeper of his father's flocks, and thought it

no degradation from the glory of the great Jehovah to sing of Him as "*the Shepherd of Israel.*" Therefore the title of "Shepherd" is one of great antiquity, and one of great honour.

Even the Almighty, Himself, does not hesitate to accept and appropriate the designation: "For thus saith the Lord God, *Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day... I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring them again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.*" (Ezek. 34:11-16). THUS FROM THE ANCIENT TIMES THE HONOURABLE AND BLESSED OFFICES WERE LIKENED TO THAT OF A SHEPHERD, and especially the dignity and excellence of Him in whom all offices centred, and all types and prophecies are fulfilled.

In the many sayings of our dear Saviour, He pictures to us His character, work, office, and relation to His people. But in none of these is the profound blessedness and preciousness of our Lord presented more impressively than in the picture which has deeply affected the Christian heart in all ages, namely, "Christ the Good Shepherd." Because of its intense tenderness, mingled with sublimest dignity which pervades the description, it is universally admitted to be one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the most familiar images in all the Holy Scriptures. And though the Saviour took to Himself this title before His crucifixion, and with reference to His death for His sheep, it connects equally with His resurrection and His exaltation to glory.

Indeed as we behold Him exercising His shepherding care over His disciples, immediately after His resurrection, IT IS EVIDENT THAT HE INTENDED THAT THIS TITLE AND OFFICE AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD SHOULD BE A PERPETUAL ONE. In his letter to his Christian brethren subsequent to Christ's resurrection, the Apostle Peter speaks of it as a *present office* of our blessed Lord, and reminds them of how they were once as sheep going astray, but are now returned *to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.* And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (13:20) speaks of Christ as even now "that Great Shepherd of the sheep," whom "the God of peace brought again from the dead."

THAT GREAT SHEPHERD

Two aspects of the subject present themselves for our consideration. First, The characteristics of Christ with reference to His people, Second, The characteristics of His people with reference to Christ. In taking to Himself this title, our Saviour would therefore have us see in Him a being of great dignity, personal excellence, and princely authority. But it implies much more than this. Majesty and honour may awe and terrify, but of *themselves*, beget no bond of loving confidence and peaceful sympathy. We may know that Jesus is our blessed Lord and Saviour and be filled with reverence and adoration; but *we need more than this to put us at ease* in our contemplations of Him. And it is just *this requirement* that His character as Shepherd was meant to meet. It is a title of most intimate connection, familiarity and sympathy.

This intimacy is not at once so manifest until we become acquainted with pastoral life and duty in the ancient world. In Palestine, particularly, there was between the shepherd and his flock the *closest union* of attachment and tenderness. It was a country of intense ruggedness, and many consequent dangers from torrents, robbers and wild beast. *The shepherd...never left his flock. He lived with his sheep by day and he slept near them by night.* HIS EYE WAS EVER ON THEM, AND HE BECAME AS FAMILIAR TO THEM AS ONE OF THEMSELVES. He continually incurred personal risks and inconveniences for them. He learnt to love them and to feel that his interests and theirs were the same. The hazards and hardships of the flock were shared by him. His chief study was *their safety and comfort.* When they suffered or were in want, he took it upon himself, and was never happier than when he saw them satisfied and in peace. *Their danger was his danger, and their lot was his lot.*

The blessed Saviour has this living fellowship with all His people. He has left the society of others and become one of themselves, and joined Himself to them and them to Him, as one body, *bearing the same burdens of their life, necessities and exposure,* and giving Himself forever to their good peace. Like another and more glorious David, He stands out against the bear and the lion, that His flock may live; and puts His life in the place of theirs. *He imperils Himself in their sight,* and persists in the struggle even unto death, that they may see and know how truly their interests are assumed by Him, and then returns to them after His victory to reassure them how all His soul and strength are given for their security and blessedness, and *how safe they are* in His gracious keeping.

A GUIDE AND DEFENDER

A good shepherd is the *guide* of his flock. He knows his sheep. He understands their characters, their wants, their dangers. HE IS ENTIRELY ACQUAINTED WITH THE INMOST NATURE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL OF THEM, AND HOW THEY NEED TO BE DEALT WITH. He even calls them by name, and *chooses* them the *directions* in which they are to move, the *paths* they are to follow, the *places* in which they may roam by

day, and the *folds* in which they are to rest at night. When he would conduct them from one scene to another, *he goes before them and calls to them, that they may follow. And so is Christ the *Guide* of His people. He is thoroughly acquainted with every one of them, and selects all their changes for them, Even as the Father knows Him, and as He knows the Father, *so He knows His people*; and His every movement and word is meant to influence them towards their highest security and blessedness.

In all the varied paths and perilous places of human life, "*He goeth before them.*" Having looked out the good pasture, He takes the lead to bring us to it; or espying danger, He directs the way to avoid it. His Word often calls *in directions which we do not expect*, in ways that are very bewildering, over rocky paths, through thorny thickets, by dark and threatening ravines; but He knows exactly whither He would take us, and *what we can endure*; and is simply doing the work of the Good Shepherd to bring us where we may lie down in green pastures, and rest beside the still waters. The good shepherd cares for the sheep. His heart is drawn out toward them. And all his dealings with regard to them are conditioned by an undying affection for them. If any are fearful, or weak, or in necessity, his eye notices it, and his sympathy is enlisted, and the needed help is afforded.

The traveller in the oriental lands has seen with what tender solicitude the shepherd bound up the injured limb of some suffering member of his flock; how gently he took up the yet feeble lambs in his arms to carry them over the rough places, and up the difficult steps, and across the rapid waters; how kindly he helped such as were labouring with their burdens; how he lay all night at the mouth of the cave where he had folded his precious charge, that they might rest undisturbed till the morning dawned. *Even so* the blessed Saviour *cares for us*, and serves us, *both in the light and in the darkness*. A GOOD SHEPHERD IS ALSO THE FAITHFUL DEFENDER OF HIS FLOCK. He "giveth his life for the sheep." He stands by them in every peril, and defends them to the last extremity.

So Christ has loved His people, even to die for them. Nor have they a foe against which He is not armed, or from which He is not ready to defend them. No man shall pluck them out of His hand. All the resources of His might stand pledged for their security. The eternal majesty of the good Father of mercies must be vanquished and destroyed before even the feeblest of them can be touched, or have so much as a hair harmed. A shepherd indeed is Christ, of the true blood, and of a more than Davidic chivalry; a good, genuine, true-born Shepherd, who would sooner suffer the extinction of His own existence than that His sheep should fall a prey to the destroyer. "*Fear not, little flock,*" is His gracious word to His people. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." – Isa. 41:10.

THE SHEEP OF HIS HAND

Let us look now at the second aspect of this subject. *As Christ is a Shepherd, so His people are sheep.* Those who are His charge and care are described as "the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." (Psa. 95:7). This reminds us of our exposed and lost estate without Christ. A sheep is an ignorant and defenceless creature by nature. It is quite incapable of self-government, and perishes without someone to look after it, and to provide for it. And it has many enemies, much more powerful than itself, against which it is in no way armed or defended. It must have a keeper.

We cannot be happy as our own masters. The sins and errors of the past, the bewildering difficulties of the present, and the darkness of the future, are all alike full of sources of distress and boding of unavoidable ill, if left to ourselves. The soul in its absence from the fold of Christ, whatever its momentary thoughtlessness, yearns and seeks about for someone to stand between it and danger, between it and disturbing uncertainty, between it and guilt. Hence the disposition of people of all classes and ages to group themselves around teachers, kings, conquerors, reformers, heroes, and to welcome to their hearts any show of ability to be entrusted with the keeping of what they cannot, with any idea of security, retain in their own hands.

Yet, as often as people have entrusted themselves to mere *earthly* leaders and human lights, the deeper has been their bewilderment, and the more certain has been their disappointment and ruin. It was in this helpless and lost condition that Christ found His people at His First Advent. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. 9:36). Thus in due time the Good Shepherd was sent from on high. He began the assembling of His flock, the Elect, destined to be fellow-heirs of His glory. And never at any time since has He forsaken them or left them straying and fainting in the wilds of nature.

THEY HAVE BEEN GATHERED OUT OF EVERY SORROWFUL STATE KNOWN IN THIS ERRING WORLD, AND HAVE BECOME A PEOPLE SEPARATED UNTO GOD. Before He began the gathering of His sheep, it was as if they were lost in the wilderness, and the Lord went out seeking them until He found them. By the mouth of the prophet, He said of old, "I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places whither they be scattered,...and I will bring them out from the people,...and feed them upon the moun-

tains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.”

Having bought them with His blood, and come to them by His word and sacraments, and graciously proposed Himself to them as their true Shepherd, and drawn them by His loving ways and Spirit, *they have learned to know Him*, to confide in His wisdom and goodness, and to separate themselves from all the rest of the world, *to be one with Him* as their ever-blessed Lord and Master. *The word is that they know Him*. “I am known of Mine.”

THEY KNOW HIS VOICE

They have not only been taught, *who* He is, but they have *personal* acquaintance with Him. *They know Him by their own experiences of His goodness*. They have come to a sort of intuitive capacity to recognise Him. His voice, His *Spirit*, His Will, and His whole method, are as *familiar* to them, and are as readily distinguished by them, *as their own thoughts*. In whatever aspect He may present Himself, they know that it is He. And whether in view, or for the time, out of sight, they are satisfied that He is their true Shepherd, and that all His movements are for their good. Let men slander Him as they will, or bring what false reports concerning Him they may, *His sheep know Him*, that He is *everything* that they can require, and that *He is above all shepherds*, “The Good Shepherd!”

Knowing Christ is a thing of the soul and its affections, *more* than the intellect. There is such a thing as knowing *of* Christ, possessing complete *intellectual* information concerning His person and work, *and still being a stranger to Him*. Few seem to realise that. *Right* knowledge of Jesus is from *the Holy Spirit* moving the heart: not by the apparatus of mere cold philosophy, but by the still small voice which mixes itself with the *inmost feelings*. It is not found merely in systematic formulas nor dogmatic structures of Gospel truths, which, however valuable, complete, and beautiful, are *without the Spirit of God*, as dead as the little houses which the child builds with his blocks.

What is of primary importance is not the arrangement of these truths in piles for our admiration, **BUT TO HAVE THEIR SPIRIT INFUSED INTO OUR SOULS AND LIVES, AND TRANSLATED INTO THE LIVING PULSATIONS OF OUR HEARTS**. And in this, many of the humblest and least scientific are often more successful than brethren of very astute minds. *They know the Truth by being true*. They may not yet understand the Shepherd’s conversations, nor be able to blow the Shepherd’s reed, but, as His sheep, *they know Him as their Shepherd*. They know that they are His, and that they are safe in Him.

Thus, with the feelings of the soul assured, they have a deeper and more satisfactory knowledge than *any mere framework* of argument and intellect *alone* can give. Furthermore, *they hear His voice*. This was not true of the most of those to whom Christ first addressed Himself. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) Haughty Pharisees and learned Scribes, *too wise in their own conceit to take in the logic of the heart*, demanded by what authority He did these things, and called for signs from Heaven to prove to them that the Truth was true.

The unlettered fisherman at the first word *felt a chord touched in their souls*, and responded with loving confidence and obedience, and confessed by the revealing light in their hearts that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God; but the more *favoured* “children of the Kingdom” would have none of Him. They did not know Him, and would not hear His voice. They even made war with Him, and persecuted Him unto death. Therefore He tuned His back upon *that fold*, and *looked elsewhere to find His sheep*, which yet lay scattered among the nations, or wandering in the dark wilderness of heathenism. If the majority of the ancient fold, “His own,” refused Him, He would find others who should hear Him to complete the flock. **AND SO CHRIST ALL ALONG THROUGH THIS AGE, HAS BEEN FINDING AND SHEPHERDING HIS TRUE SHEEP.**

THEY HEAR HIS CALL

As the sheep know their shepherd, they know *his call* and obey it. The voice of Jesus is His preached Gospel. The hearing of that voice is not the mere hearing of the outward ear, but *a hearing with the heart and soul and life*, as the *knowing* of Him is of the *heart*. More than once have travellers seen great flocks strung along the hillsides of the sacred land, and seemingly indifferent to everything that was passing. But the moment the shepherd gave his call to lead them down at evening to where they were to be folded for the night, instantly they lifted up their heads, left off their grazing among the rocks and *started after their leader*.

In the morning, though several flocks belonging to different shepherds were together in the same shelter during the night, the shepherd of one had only to give his call and all the sheep belonging to him at once separated themselves from the rest, and took after him. **THEY HEARD HIS VOICE. THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT HE MEANT AND THEY CONFIDENTLY OBEYED.** *Even so, Christ’s sheep hear His voice and follow Him*. Moreover, there are under-shepherds of the flock who are counselled to guard not only against wolves, but also to warn any wayward sheep that is *dull of hearing* the Good Shepherd’s voice, and tends to stray away *into forbidden paths* and lead others after him, particularly the lambs. And yet, again, Christ’s sheep are all one. They are gathered from different quarters and from many nationalities.

A LITTLE FLOCK

In all the Christian centuries, believers from many races and tongues have been found to make up the predetermined number of the “Little Flock” to inherit the Kingdom. Yet, of whatever national blood, from whatever region brought, or under whatever social economy reared, *they are all one in Christ Jesus – OF THE ONE FOLD OF THIS AGE, WITH ONE SHEPHERD.* It is true indeed that as an entire body, *they do not know each other here.* They may be ignorant of each other’s language or existence. Some may be high up on the summits, and some may be down among the valleys. Hills, mountains, rivers, seas may be between them. *A stranger might think they belonged to very different owners. Indeed, IN NO KIND OF VISIBLE BODY HAS CHRIST’S FLOCK EVER BEEN KNOWN.*

THE TRUE SAINTS OF GOD, MARKED AND SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, ARE THE CHURCH INVISIBLE! No matter how much the sheep of Christ’s flock may be scattered and separated *in human eyes wherever they are, they all know Christ, and are known of Him,* and hear His voice, and so are all joined together as one flock, members of the same fold, and having the *one* Shepherd. *External* differences may be many. Accidental elements of diversity may separate them widely. But *inwardly* looking to Him as their Shepherd, and *experimentally and in heart* made acquainted with His saving goodness, they are still *one body, with the same Head,* and united in one common fellowship of life and salvation. The further word of Jesus is, *“I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”* (John 10:28) (WOTM 11/561)

TWIN PROMISES

(One negative and one positive)

“No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly.”

(Psalm 84:11)

“Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good.”

(Psalm 85:12)

Eventide - A Memorial Meditation

“So He bringeth them unto their desired haven”

This may be said to be the Eventide of all 1 Eventides to us, for it holds memories which no other eventide in all the year can hold. Often we have asked ourselves as we gathered to the Table of the Lord “will this be the last time we shall celebrate together these memorials of His death. We may have gathered in the Lord for ten, twenty, in some cases even fifty years to “show the Lord’s death till he come”, and have always found this to be the night outstanding from all other nights for us.

At other times, by means of study or address, our minds might range the whole wide field between Paradise lost and Paradise regained, but on this night there is but one theme to which we may rightly turn. *“As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come”.* (1 Cor.11:26). So at his request it has come about that pious souls, over the centuries, have drawn together to “remember him”, and commemorate the act that made His broken body and shed blood available for their needs.

That sacrifice has accomplished something for needy men which nothing else in all creation could have brought about. It is in that body broken for our sakes, and in that blood shed for our sins, that all the satisfying merit has been found. Some may claim to see more of one thing, others more of another in that sacrifice, but however much we may seek to define or apportion this or that, it was His death that made redemption in its every phase a possibility. Upon that death the plan of God was made to hinge and turn. It is that death we have before us this eventide. Out of very gratitude we can sing.

“Saviour, thy dying Love

Thou gavest me,

Nor would I aught withhold

Dear Lord from thee

In love my soul would bow

My heart fulfil its vow

Myself an offering now

I bring to thee.”

If we have also seen this opportunity as an occasion to renew our consecration vows, and to repeat our affirmed desire to be made “dead with him” to God’s sovereign Will, that simple stanza can be our fervent prayer.

Let us not forget, that there is a communion “in the blood of Christ”, and “in the body of Christ” (1 Cor.10:16) which calls for the fullest consecration to the Will of God (as to an Altar. 1 Cor.10:18) and while

there is no thought of vicarious merit or of ransom-purchase here, it calls for the outright surrender and fullest consecration of all we have, and are, and hope to be to the sovereign purposes of Almighty God. And if we see it thus, the drinking of the Cup and breaking of the Bread can carry to our hearts the double thought, and we can also say,

*“Jesus, our Mercy Seat, covering me...
My grateful heart looks up, Saviour to thee
Help me the news to bear
Thy wondrous Love declare
Spread thy truth everywhere
Dear Lord for thee.*

*All that I am and have, thy gifts so free;
All of my ransomed life, dear Lord, for thee!
And when thy face I see
Thy sweet ‘well done’ shall be
Through all eternity
Enough for me”*

Once more, by the grace of God, we have been spared to meet together at the Table of the Lord, and partake, with those who love his blessed Name, of those simple emblems that stand for so much to us. We have acknowledged our indebtedness to him for his redemptive sacrifice, and have re-affirmed our own desire to be dead with him. Let us now ask the God of all grace and comfort to help us in the fulfilling of our vows, that thus our communion with Christ may be complete and entire, and that we may yet the more be “conformed unto his death”.

Let us in this quiet eventide so resolve to appreciate what we have done, that should it be our last, we may be found of him acceptable and ready to appear before His glorious face.

*“What rapturous joy shall then be ours
Forever Lord, with thee,
Clothed with our resurrection powers
Thine endless praise shall be.”*

TRULY BEAUTIFUL

Beautiful hands are they that do
The work of the noble good and true,
Busy for them the long day through.
Beautiful faces - they that wear,
The light of a pleasing spirit there,
It matters little if dark or fair,
And truly beautiful in God’s sight,
Are the precious souls who love the right.
(Anon)