

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 40:3-8

VOL. XXXVIII.

MONCTON, N. B., JAN. 31st, 1940

No. 40

CONCENTRATION

(By Rev. D. R. Chatreau)

Ours is a day of confusion and conflict, a period when everything in the nature of upheaval is designated on the one hand as development and progress (and on the other as chaos and collapse. Pessimism, disillusionment, and misgiving are the attitudes in vogue at the moment, and there is a widespread feeling of unrest and insecurity among men. We are not without some searching analysis, some accurate diagnosis and good intentions, but so much of it seems to be fruitless and ineffective. We are in immediate danger of "barking up a tree." We have reached a new crisis in the course of human history—a crisis more significant than a mere turning point or milestone on the road to ultimate destiny. Rather, it is a true "Krisis" (Greek),—a judgment of God. Nor do I use the word "judgment" in any external sense as an imposed penalty, but as an instance of the inescapable law that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." How soon Christians everywhere will grasp this principle in both its individual and collective significance will, in a large degree, determine the destiny of the nation. Until then, none of us dare hazard an opinion as to what shall be the final issue of the present turmoil.

For one, I cannot but feel that if the church had retained the Pentecostal pattern, and despised the patronage of militarism in the days of her struggle for an existence, the picture might be vastly different today. But it is easy enough for us at this safe distance from that bloody era to say what ought and what ought not to have been done. We shall have enough to do to give account for our own reactions to the tests and temptations which beset the church in our day. We must face the foe, however formidable, and make certain, by the grace of God that the church of the next generation shall have no cause to upbraid us for cowardice and infirmity of purpose as we faced the problem of the church in the day in which we lived. And this assurance can only be secured by personal application of ourselves as Christians to the business of being Christian.

Perhaps the most frequent indictment of Christianity (on this side of the Atlantic, at least) is that it lacks virility. Of course there is a distinction to be made between that Christianity which is merely nominal and that which is vitally Christian. But does an unfriendly world pause to make such discriminations? Certainly not when it is determined to rid itself of every vestige of an element which (even nominally) is adverse to its policies and aims. It is not too much to suggest, then, that we accept the indictment as a challenge, and, by the grace of God live so as to stop the mouth of the gainsayer. And how shall this be done? There is but one sec-

ret—**spiritual concentration!** Purpose, decision, will,—these are the elements of success in the profession, in economics, etc., and no less so in religion, especially the religion of Christ.

There is no finer example of spiritual concentration than St. Paul. Of course he was, as Herbert S. Seekins suggests (in "The Men of the Pauline Circle"), "Paul the intense." Mr. Seekins says, "Paul became what he was in the service of the church because of his utter consecration to the cause of the Evangel of all those personal gifts of his which had been enriched and perfected by the grace of God." In other words, the man is in the making while he is utterly devoted to Jesus Christ. None of us need remain static. Indeed, we cannot and remain Christian. Let a man be absorbed, yea, obsessed with the idea of the Kingdom of God, and, while he may master many things incidental to being useful in the world, this idea will so master him that he will eventually be in the true apostolic succession. He will develop personality through constant association with Jesus Christ in the Spirit; he will mature in thought, coming into possession of fuller and vaster truth, the effect of which will be to intensify his passion for the Kingdom of God; his zeal will manifest itself alike in the midst of tribulations (causing him to rejoice in the privilege of tribulation for the sake of the Kingdom) and in the midst of freedom and opportunities which enable him to proclaim the "Gospel of the Kingdom." That, in a word, was Paul's experience, and it may be ours. The secret of his wonderful life and of his flaming ministry may be summed up in that dramatic phrase of his, "This one thing I do." That is concentration.

And concentration is consecration in action! I rebel against the idea that consecration is merely a passive attitude in which I hand over to a possessive God all those elements and faculties of heart and mind, all those gifts and possessions which He once gave me, never to have anything to say about their use or direction thereafter. That, undoubtedly, is involved, more or less as a condition, but to stop there is to thwart the very purpose of consecration. That purpose is to so relate me to Jesus Christ that I may have the full benefits of His wisdom and power in the direction and exercise of all that is distinctly mine, in the building of the Kingdom of God. It is a case, fundamentally, of finding a new center in life, and, having the focus fixed in consecration, of organizing my life about that center (Jesus Christ) in utter and affectionate concentration on all for which it stands. In that event, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" becomes the normal experience of life. Every interest is narrowed down to the "broad limit" of this central passion. There is a transparency of motive and purity of intention which is well described in a familiar

phrase from the pen of Oswald Chambers, "frankness before God."

In such a life of devotion there is no room for the slipshod or the haphazard. Too many of us, when we are alone with our thoughts and God, discover to our chagrin that our lives alternate between "fits and starts," and, perhaps, about forty "fits" to one "start." But the concentration which is fundamental to spiritual success implies the dropping of all encumbrances, and the unfettered movement of the soul towards a goal which dominates the man. There is no room here for relaxation in the sense of taking "time out." Was it Oswald Chambers, addressing a Y. M. C. A. group, who said, "You no more need a holiday from spiritual concentration, than your heart needs a holiday from beating?" And is there any more needed lesson for us to learn in this age of fluctuating ideals and shifting standards?

Now there is a great deal that one must leave unsaid in such a brief discussion as this. But this observation, in closing, is important: Today, civilization, with its elaborate culture, its worldly wisdom, its proud power, its futilities and follies, its sordid schemes and petty projects, is fast moving towards a total collapse. And if ever a defeated, disillusioned, dissipated humanity was ready for a new program and a new dynamic it is now! But whether or not a blindly groping and rapidly disintegrating civilization shall ever come into possession of that new program and that new dynamic depends almost entirely upon the effectiveness of our Christian witness in the midst of the failing theories and futile efforts of man apart from God. And, mark it well, the effectiveness of our witness depends upon the adequacy of our experience of Christ and the steadfastness of our application to the task which is involved in discipleship. We must bring every gift, faculty, and energy to the task of making Christ known and felt in the world. Beloved, whether you believe that we are hastening to the consummation of human affairs, or just now entering upon a renewed conquest with the powers of darkness for the Kingdom of God, does it not seem as if the hour has struck for a revival of concentration with a view to great things in Christian achievement?

COMPLETE OUTFIT

It is related of a native Chinese preacher that he addressed a large conference of workers as follows: "Ask the Master for Peter's hook to bring up fish; David's crook to guide the sheep aright; Gideon's torch to light up the dark places; Moses' guiding-rod; David's sling to prostrate your giant foe; the brazen serpent to cure the bites of the world's snakes; for gospel seed with no tares in it; and, above all, for the wonderful Holy Spirit to help at all times."—Selected.