



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."

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A HERALD OF HOLINESS

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Rev. Thomas Cook, Methodist connexional evangelist and first principal of Cliff College (England), was an ardent preacher of entire sanctification by faith. But the life he lived was even greater than the message he proclaimed. His writings on holiness are still regarded as the classic interpretation of the doctrine. Here is the story of his own entry into the blessing of holiness.

Thomas Cook was converted in his sixteenth year. A few lay preachers had banded themselves together for mission purposes and "attacked" South Bank, in the northern city of Middlesbrough (Yorkshire, Eng.) Cook was one of their first converts. His brother says: "There was neither excitement nor sentiment about my brother's conversion: not even a tremor of limb. But there was conviction and enlightened determination." His decision for Christ came at the right moment; for he had made his first bet by putting "sixpence on a horse." It was also his last. Writing, himself, in later years of his conversion, Thomas Cook said: "My conversion was so clear and satisfactory that I could never doubt its reality. It was an eventful day . . . when I first realized God's pardoning mercy, and received the assurance of His favor. The beginnings of this life of loyalty and love I shall never forget. It seems but yesterday, though many years have now passed since the love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and I was reconciled to God, who loved me, even me. It was a change as from death unto life. A new fountain of joy was at once opened in my heart, so exceedingly precious and sweet as to utterly extinguish all desire for that which I had called pleasure before . . . I was truly a new creature."

"Ye are my witnesses." These words stirred Cook and urged him and others forward to a missionary crusade. At nights, when the day's toil was over, they went forth into the streets of Middlesbrough and declared to all the message of grace.

Though Thomas Cook was a singularly earnest Christian, yet he was far from satisfied with his own spiritual experience. Shortly after his conversion he experienced that lusting of the old carnal nature. It had been stunned at conversion but definitely not destroyed. Petty annoyances chafed and the temptations of Satan assailed, and pride, envy, self-will and other forms of the self-nature began to manifest themselves. "The 'old man,'" he said, "was bound, but not cast out; the disease was modified, but not eradicated; the son was suspended, but not fully destroyed . . . Sin was stunned and deadened and held in check by

grace; its power was broken, but its pollution continued. It did not reign, but it existed, making its presence felt in a constant 'bent to sinning' . . . There were foes within as well as without."

His Christian life was most unsatisfactory. "My experience was full of fits and starts, changeable and uneven. I was conscious also of a mighty want; there seemed a vacuum in my nature which grace had not filled, a strange sense of need, which I cannot describe, but which all who love the Lord Jesus with less than perfect love will understand." Yet his life was one of continuous action, but small were the results thereof. For three and a half years this state of affairs continued; and then God led His servant into reading some old Methodist biographies, and the reading of them filled his heart with longings and expectations for things better. Believing that what God had done for them He would likewise do for him, and possessing a great longing to enjoy the fulness of the Spirit of which these Methodists spoke, Thomas Cook began at once to seek the blessing and determined to give God no rest until he was sanctified entirely. Alas . . .! The more he sought it, the harder it seemed to be able to enter in. He was beginning to see the sinfulness of sin, the traitor of carnality that lurked within the city of Mansoul and so prevented Prince Emmanuel's taking full possession. "I saw," he said, "what a charnel-house it was—a depth of depravity there was which would have once utterly paralyzed my faith, and extinguished my life." It was thus that he saw the goodness of God in not revealing the depths of inbred sin when he sought the initial work of forgiveness and regeneration.

Led of the Spirit, Thomas Cook was coming to an end of himself. Not until he did were the peace and liberty of Canaan to be his. It was with him as with Thomas Upham, who once said: "The remains of every form of internal opposition to God appeared to be centred in one point—selfishness." Once he had prayed to be saved from his sins; now he must pray to be saved from himself. He struggled and wrestled for the victory; but he was to discover that sin and self die hard—very hard.

Listening to many testimonies, one is tempted to think that the appropriating of the fulness of salvation is an easy thing; but Thomas Cook proved it otherwise. The way was through the Garden and by the cross. "I had to learn the hard lesson that every victory is gained through surrender, and that the place of life is the place of death. I saw it all clearly enough, that before there could be a full and glorious resurrection to spiritual life and blessedness, there must be first a com-

plete death of self—my hands must be empty if I would grasp a whole Christ." Time and time again he searched his heart, praying the Spirit that He would reveal any idol of which he was unconscious. But peace tarried. Acting on the advice of a friend, one deeply taught in the school of the Spirit, he took pencil and paper and wrote thereon several items of his life; but as far as he knew, he could honestly add, "Sacred to Jesus," of every one of them. The language of his soul was, "None of self and all of Thee." His consecration was now complete; yet He who had promised to come "suddenly into his temple" tarried. Why? Thomas Cook sought the blessing out of works rather than in naked faith. "What strugglings and wrestlings and tears I might have been saved," he said later, "had I known the simple way of faith then as I do now: but I had no one to help me."

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. At any rate it was so with young Cook. Several months of soul agony had passed when God brought him into contact with Joshua Dawson, the burly evangelist of the Yorkshire Dales, who preached full salvation as a present privilege and responsibility and receivable by faith. Years later Thomas Cook said: "It was like a revelation from heaven to me, and I rejoiced in hope, though not in actual possession of the fulness during that visit." Some of his friends did enter into the Canaan land experience, but not Cook. He made the great mistake of depending upon feelings and emotion rather than on the Lord Himself. Another friend had been prostrated under a weight of glory which fell upon him as he entered into the blessing, and Thomas Cook sought the same emotional experience. He had to learn that God rarely deals with two persons alike. He might speak to Saul of Tarsus 'neath the Syrian midday sun and to the Philippian jailer in an earthquake, to Elijah in a "still small voice," and Lydia as the opening of the petals. To Thomas Cook He spoke in "a voice of quietness." (R. V.) "I saw my blunder afterwards," he continued, "and was willing to be blessed in God's way, with or without emotion." It was then that God spoke a second time, "Be thou every whit made whole (or clean)."

The struggle was to end. The Spirit had led him to an end of self and the act of absolute surrender; he had seen the folly of setting God a timetable and plan of action. Now the Spirit of God was to plunge Cook into the cleansing current.

A few of the friends who had been sanctified during Dawson's visit decided to meet together weekly, encourage one another in the way, and help all earnest seekers after

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