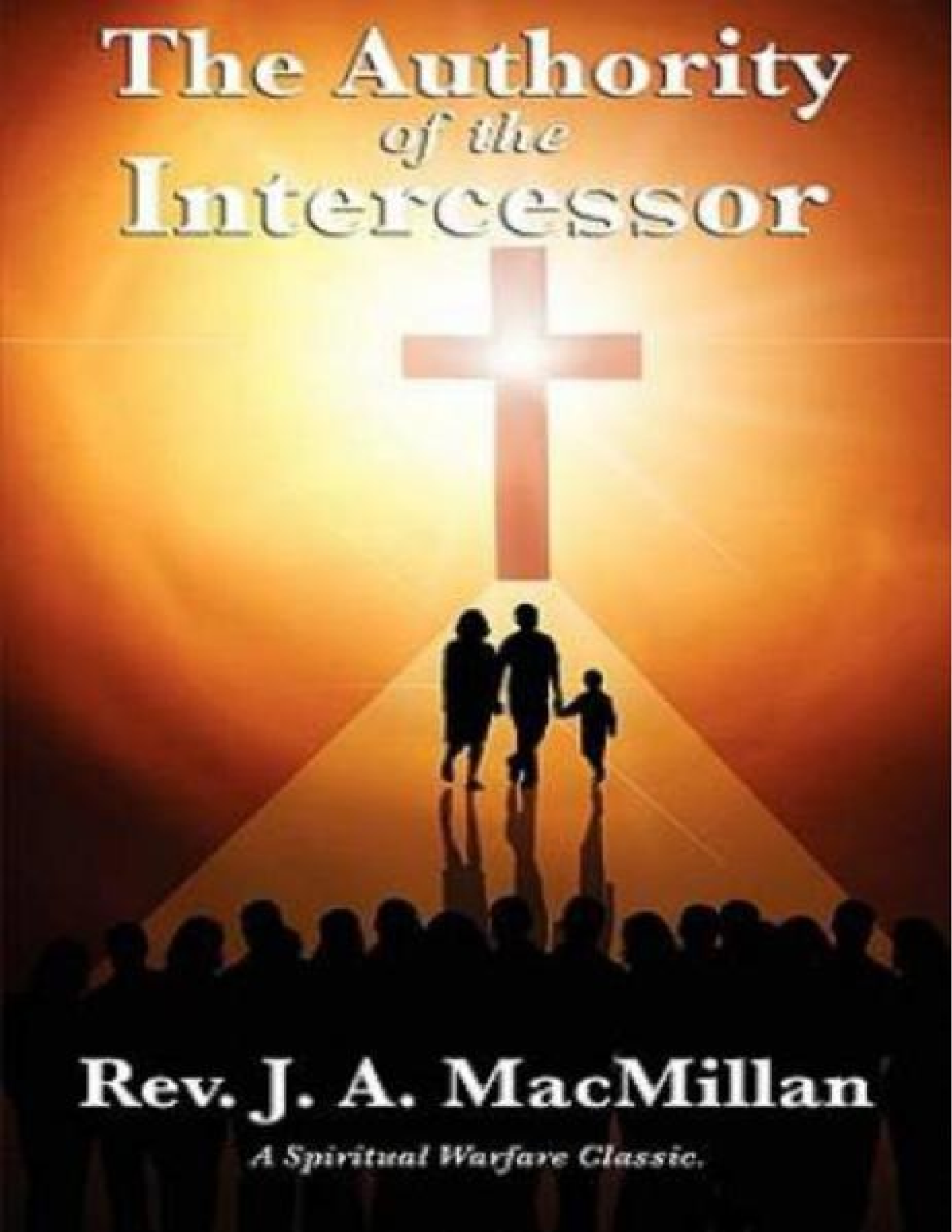
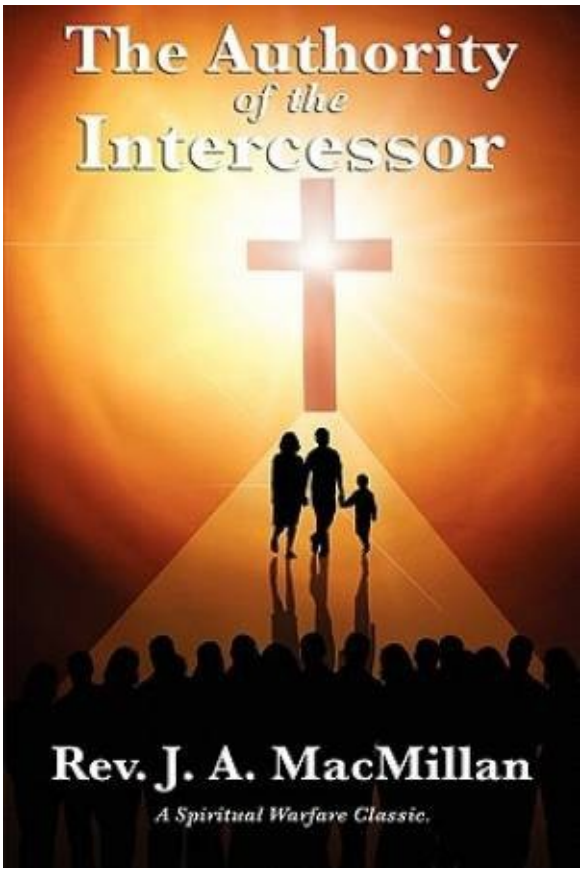
The Authority of the Intercessor



Rev. J. A. MacMillan

A Spiritual Warfare Classic.



The Authority Of The Intercessor By John A. MacMillain

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PREFACE

The rapidly approaching end of the age is witnessing

a tremendous increase in the activity of the powers of darkness. Unrest among the nations, more intense than at any previous time in earth's history, is due largely to the stirring up of the ambitions and passions of men, while the spread of an almost wholly secularized education is quietly doing away with the Scriptural standards which formerly exerted a restraining influence among the so-called Christian peoples. Our wealth and social culture have not made us thankful to the Giver of all good, but have centered us upon the material things of the world, and have produced a self-sufficiency that quite ignores our dependence upon the Creator of all. Godlessness, which we have condemned so strongly in the Soviet Union, is almost equally as pronounced, though less blatant, in our own land.

These conditions are reacting strongly upon the great ministry of the Church of Christ, the giving of the Gospel to the heathen world. War has dosed many doors in foreign lands, and at the same time has cut off financial contributions in not a few countries which formerly took an active interest in missions.

More serious still is the attitude of large sections of the church towards the state of the heathen. No longer are these concerned about the lost souls which wander in darkness; their thought is centered on raising their social status and meeting their intellectual and physical needs. They seek, in their own jargon, to "build a better world," but the world they envision is one without a Saviour. Christ, in their view, has degenerated into a Superman, an Example which in their own feeble strength they seek to follow.

To meet the situation, the Church of Christ needs a new conception of prayer. The urgent call is for men and women, wholly yielded to the Lord, whose eyes have been enlightened to see the ministry in the heavenlies to which they have been called. Such believers, whether as intercessors, or as workers at home, or missionaries on the foreign fields, may in union with the great Head of the Body, exercise an authority to which the powers of the air must give place wherever challenged.

The three articles which follow have appeared in The Alliance Weekly, and are an extension of the truths set forth in "The Authority of the Believer." They have been reprinted at the request of a number of readers of the Weekly, and are sent forth in the hope that they may prove a spiritual blessing to many.

CHAPTER 1

The Authority Of The Intercessor

A SECRET OF THE CLOSET

So unreasonable to the natural mind seems the proposition of Jehovah to His people (Isa. 45: 11) that they should "command" Him concerning the work of His hands, that various alternative readings of the passage have been made with the intent of toning down the apparent extravagance of the divine offer.

Men are slow to believe that the Almighty really means exactly what He says. They think it a thing incredible that He should share with human hands the throttle of infinite power. Nor have they the spiritual understanding to comprehend the purpose of the Father to bring those who have been redeemed with the precious blood of His dear Son into living and practical co-operation with that Son in the administration of His kingdom.

The people of Christ are revealed in the New Testament (Eph. 1: 23) as "the fulness of him who filleth all in all." They bear a vital relationship to Him as members of His body, through whom His glorious purposes are to be wrought out in eternity.

Consequently, it is not a strange thing that, in this present preparatory age, He should make large revelations and offers of His grace, in order that He may test the faith and develop the spiritual powers of those who will be sharers of the authority and ministry of His throne through the coming ages. We need have no fear in accepting the fullest implications of the words above referred to, in spite of the critical attitude of even some devout scholars.

The principle involved is set forth in other places of the Word of God, in different phraseology it may be, but with equal cogency and clarity. Our duty is to draw near with the boldness of faith and in the attitude and readiness of full obedience. Faith will prove a key to unlock every mystery of the truth ; obedience will secure our entrance through the door thus opened. In a new and deeper sense we shall discover ourselves to be sons abiding ever in the great

house of the Father, partaking of all its relationships and responsibilities. Its many ministries will become vivid as we move about in them, speaking words of authority, and seeing the behests of the Spirit of God, which are uttered through us, carried out to their fulfillment.

THE COUNSELS OF THE HEART

In Psalm 20 the coming Messiah is set before us in His human aspect. It is for Him a time of trouble, but the name of the God of Jacob has set Him on high, and divine grace sends forth His help from the sanctuary. His offerings are remembered and accepted before the Most High. Then follows a prophetic petition: "Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel." The desires and purposes of this Chosen Servant of God are promised full accomplishment. All of His heart plans are acceptable to Jehovah; they are in full accord with the divine ideals; therefore, a second assurance is given: "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions."

The One who is thus addressed is the Son of man, the great Representative of our humanity. Through Him the Spirit of God had unhindered liberty in carrying out the divine counsel during all His earthly career.

His human will was in constant and perfect alignment with that of the Father in heaven. No shadow ever rose between Him and God save that thick cloud of our sins which enveloped Him on Calvary. At each step of His daily walk He could say, "I do always the things that please him." Because this was true, there was no bar to the granting of the desires of His heart, or to the fulfilment of His inward counsels.

The deep reality of the union between Christ and His people is but little comprehended by the great majority of believers. It is compared by the Holy Spirit to the relationship of a head to the members of the body over which it is set. Where perfect health prevails, the members are responsive to the slightest impulses of the head. .But if disease prevails in any part of the body, there is a lack of full co-ordination, some member or members being tardy in obedience, or inaccurate in carrying out their rightful functions, or it may be unable to obey at all. The body of Christ differs from the human body in that each member possesses an individual volition which must be surrendered voluntarily to the will of the Head.

Much schism, alas, exists also in the body as a whole, and much self-will in the individual member. These things hinder healthy growth and the free outworking of the purposes of Christ. Yet, where any member dwells fully in his place, "holding the head"

(Col. 2: 19), there is not only full co-operation but also true identity of desire with the Lord, and the Master's promise finds occasion of fulfilment: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15: 7).

Note carefully the significance of the statement, "Ye shall ask what YE will." How many believers content themselves with a submissive uttering of the words, "Thy will be done," in all matters which they bring before the Lord. Their spirits assume a passive attitude that accepts anything that comes to them as the will of the Father. This is not scriptural, and it is very far from the desire of God for His children. The Holy Spirit teaches a hearty co-operation rather than mere resignation ; an active entering into God's plan instead of a vague yielding to circumstances; a definite claiming and appropriating of the promises which are set before us in the Word, as being the expression of the Father's will for His children. We are to positively will the will of God; to seek it out as He has revealed it; and to maintain our place of quiet assurance before Him until it has been fully accomplished.

Dr. E. E. Helms once told of how he had promised a bicycle to his son. They went out together to inspect the various models, and to make the purchase. The boy led the way to a particular store, and indicated a machine which he said was the one he wanted. His father suggested it might be better to look at some others before finally deciding. But the lad was quite sure as to his own mind. "Father," he said, "I've been scouting round already, and sized them all up, and this is the one I want. I'm going to stay here until I get it." He was successful; and his father in telling the story remarked that if we would take that attitude in our praying there would be fewer unanswered prayers.

That attitude will ensure the carrying out of the promise to the Head: "Jehovah ... grant thee according to thy heart's desire, and fulfil all thy counsel." The member of the body has come into complete intimacy with the Head; he discerns the purposes of his Lord; through his purposeful petitions, Christ's own heart's desires are fulfilled. Of not a few of the saints this characteristic has been true in a marked degree. It is not the fault of the Head that it cannot be said of all.

THE SHARING OF AUTHORITY

Matthew, in the closing chapter of his Gospel, shows us the King on the mountain in Galilee which He had appointed as the rendezvous for His disciples. He is speaking to the group of followers who surround Him: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth." It may seem a strange statement to many Christians, but it is nevertheless a profound spiritual truth that the authority of the risen Head at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, is planned to reach its full development and manifestation through His body.

The Son of God became incarnate, not merely that He might save men from their sins, but also that He might bring man to that place of dominion over the works of God which was planned in the counsels of eternity (Psa. 8). Today, the inspired writer tells us (Heb. 2: 9), "we see Jesus" holding in trust for redeemed mankind all that the race has lost through sin. Our Lord has Himself taken the Headship, and is forming for Himself a body through which He will fulfil the original divine purpose.

Much of the weakness of the church is due to its failure to understand and appropriate this all-important truth. It is ours, as individual members of the body, to seek that the authority of Christ shall come with full acceptance into our spirits. It is not enough to know and acknowledge that He is our fulness; there must be as well the apprehension of the complementary truth that we are also His fulness (See Eph. 1: 23). What an amazing honor and dignity is thus purposed for us: "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8: 17). For the coming of age of the body, and its entrance upon the prepared inheritance, all the rest of God's creation is waiting with earnest expectation.

THE REMOVAL OF MOUNTAINS

Serious obstacles often confront the servant of the Lord in his ministry for the bringing in of the kingdom. They seem as deep-rooted as the everlasting hills, and as imposing in their bulk. They block the way to accomplishment of desired ends.

They shut out the vision ahead. They balk the disheartened worker with their grim assurance of immobility. They seem to laugh at -his discomfiture and to mock his prayers. And, as the months and the years pass, anti no change is seen

in their contour, he comes often to accept them as a necessary evil, and to modify his plans accordingly. Such mountains of difficulty loom up on every foreign field; each home district has its range with impassable serrated peaks towering ahead; few pastorates lack at least a "little hill." They are too varied in their nature to particularize, but they are genuine and heart-breaking hindrances.

Concerning all such, the Master has assured His servants that they need not continue as obstacles to the progress of His work. The question of their removal is one of authority. The command of faith is the divine means of removing them out of the way: "Ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it shall obey you."

The question involved is not that o f an imposing faith, but that o f an all-sufficient Name. The worker has no power of himself to accomplish aught, but he is commissioned to wield the power of God. As he speaks to the mountain in the name of Christ, he puts his hand on the dynamic force that controls the universe; heavenly energy is released, and his behest is obeyed.

Authority is not prayer, though the worker who prays can alone exercise authority. Moses cried unto God at the Red Sea (Ex. 14: 15ff), beseeching Him to work on behalf of His people, only to receive the strong reproof: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?

speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." And, as he lifted his face in amazed protest, because the way ahead was blocked by the impassable waves, Jehovah spoke again: "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it." As the impotent arm of the Lawgiver held over the waters the symbol of the authority of God, there was immediate response, "and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters (which seemed at first a barrier impossible to overcome) were a wall (of protection) to them on the right hand and on the left."

God delights to delegate His power to men, when He can find believing and obedient servants to accept and exercise it. So, when mountains rise in their way, the Lord commands His disciples to speak unto them and bid them depart into the sea. He gives no instruction to pray, although that is understood.

There is essentially the same charge as was given to Moses: "You have asked Me to work; I have granted your request, but I choose to do the work through you;

speak to the obstacle before you in my name, and it will obey." As we obediently speak to the mountain before us, there may seem to be no immediate response. But, as day by day, we maintain the attitude of authority, knowing that we are commissioned to use the name of our Lord, there will come a trembling, and a shaking, and a removing, and the mountain will slide from its base, and disappear into the sea of forgetfulness.

God is endeavoring to train workers for a future and a mighty ministry of co-operation with His Son. He therefore has here and now conferred on them the privilege of sharing the authority with which Christ was endowed as the Son of man. The burden of responsibility for its acceptance and its exercise lies with the individual believer.

THE BINDING OF THE ENEMY

A fact that is anew being forced upon the consciousness of the church of Christ is that a great and aggressive warfare is being waged against her by unseen and powerful foes. The Scriptures have long revealed it, but few have given this warfare the attention which it requires. "Our wrestling," the Apostle warns us, "is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the worldrulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6: 12). In the life of the Christian assembly, in the purity of its doctrine, in the fellowship of its members, and in their individual bodies and circumstances, subtle forces are working with keen understanding and masterful direction. The opposition is veiled, but it is real, and it is sometimes tremendous. Because its source is unrecognized, it is the more effective. The powers of evil are allowed often to have practically free course in groups of believers. Troubles that might be easily overcome, if rightly diagnosed, are laid to other causes, and because the remedy is not applied, the difficulties may increase until the very existence of the congregation is threatened.

In one of the cities of Canada, the pastor of an Alliance Branch said to the writer: "There are about four different troubles going on all the time among my people. As soon as I get one straightened out, the devil has another ready to take its place." Answer was made: "Brother, you are right in your diagnosis of the source of your troubles, but you are wrong in your method of meeting them. What you are looking at are the coils of the old serpent through your congregation, and, as you straighten out one kink, you may be sure that another will appear. Leave the coils alone, and go for the head; put your foot on that in

the authority of the Lord ; recognize the active agency of the enemy and conquer him; the coils will straighten out of themselves if he is dealt with." The same advice will apply in many other places. Let us learn the secret of victory through authority, as well as through prayer, and our churches will come into the place of strength, and be able to take the aggressive against the enemy.

We return to our starting point. The solution of every spiritual problem is to be found in the working of the divine energy. We long for its manifestation, and pray with intensity and with desire that it may be released in our midst. Yet there seems often to be an unaccountable delay that perplexes and discourages.

Are we fulfilling the conditions? God is ready to bless, but we fail to provide the channels along which alone can flow His supplies.

THE METHODS OF THE LORD

It is true also that the Lord is demanding a closer adherence to His appointed methods. As the individual believer matures in the Christian life, he often finds greater difficulty in maintaining spiritual victory. He had expected opposition to decrease, or at least to be more easily overcome. But he discovers that God is laying upon him heavier burdens, and testing him for larger ministries. In like manner, as the age is advancing, the church is being prepared for the final struggle by being taught lessons of individual responsibility that in the past were the property of advanced saints only. All believers might have known them, for they are revealed in the Word of God, but only the few pressed on to their attainment.

For the greater struggles of our day and the thickening atmosphere into which we are entering, the church needs intercessors who have learned the secret of taking hold of the power of God, and directing it against the strategic advances of the enemy. She needs those who have understanding of the times to know what ought to be done amid the crashing down of old standards, and the introduction of that which is uncertain and untried.

God is waiting for those whom He can trust and use, who will have the discernment to foresee His steppings and the faith to command His power.

Authoritative intercessors are men and • women, whose eyes have been opened to the full knowledge of their place in Christ. To them the Word of God has become a battle chart on which is detailed the plan of campaign of the hosts of

the Lord. They realize that they have been appointed by Him for the oversight of certain sections of the advance, and they have humbly accepted His commission. Deeply conscious of their own personal unworthiness and insufficiency, they yet believe God's statement concerning their identification with Christ in His throne power.

Increasingly they realize that heavenly responsibility rests upon them for the carrying forward of the warfare with which they have been charged. Their closet becomes a council chamber from which spiritual commands go forth concerning matters widely varied in character and separated in place. As they speak the word of 'command, God obeys. His delight is in such co-working. They have caught his thought concerning the method of the advance of His kingdom. Through them He finds it possible to carry forward purposes and to fulfil promises which have been long held back for lack-not of human laborers nor of financial means-but of understanding spiritual fellow laborers.

CHAPTER 2

The Authority Of The

Believer's Countenance

THE CONTROL OF PERSONAL

CIRCUMSTANCES

In the varied presentations of divine grace and human experience which are set forth in the Book of Psalms, two aspects embrace all others. The first is the Messianic, where the psalmist, frequently in his own person, reveals the sufferings and the glory of the incarnate Son of God, whom he recognizes, however, only as the coming King of Israel. The second is the individual aspect, in which the relationship of the believing soul to God is portrayed in numerous phases. So fully is the human heart unveiled that David, to whom most of the psalms have been ascribed, has been spoken of by one writer as "not one man, but all mankind's epitome."

The inspiration of the Spirit of God was richly upon all the authors of the psalms. Each of them knew God, and loved Him with a passion that was, perhaps, not exceeded by any of the saints of this later dispensation. Out of their own knowledge of the inner life they wrote often more wisely than they realized. Without any straining of their words it is possible to find foreshadowings of deep spiritual truths, which in their full development could not be understood till Calvary had come and gone.

Comprehension of the mysteries of the heavenly calling comes to men only as they are able to receive them. And, until the work of the Cross was complete, and the Holy Spirit was outpoured, even the most devout of God's true children were not ready for all that has since been revealed to the spiritual minds of the present age.

THE HUNGER OF THE SOUL

In Psalms 42 and 43 is finely illustrated the thought which has just been stated.

There is shown to us the awakening vision of a man whose heart was crying out for knowledge of and fellowship with God. Desire was intensified by the fact that he was in exile. Who he was we may surmise, but his identity matters little. From the "land of Jordan," where the head waters of that turbulent stream find their sources in the springs of the Hermons, he gazed with inward yearning towards the distant temple. At a former time it had been his privilege to join with the glad throngs of worshippers as they ascended the holy hill of Zion with songs of rejoicing and praise. Now, isolated amid the solitude of mountain fastnesses and cataracts, he listened with awe to one voice of nature calling unto another of the majesty of the Creator of all, while he himself seemed to be cut off from God and overwhelmed by the waves and billows of the never resting sea of life.

It is sweet to note that, in his remembrance of Jerusalem, he was craving not so much for the ordinances of the sanctuary as for God Himself. It is a precious proof of the reality and the depth of his love that every opposing circumstance but increased his desire for the divine fellowship which he had once enjoyed, which to the pious Israelite found its center of manifestation in the pace where God had chosen to reveal Himself. Though the sense of desolation was so great that it seemed to bear him down "as with a sword (a killing or crushing) in his bones," he still believed that the lovingkindness of the Lord was about Him "in the daytime" to preserve him from the pursuit of his deadly foes. And then, when the shadows of night fell, and the tabernacle of darkness enfolded him about, there stole into his heart the sweet strains of the songs of Zion mingled with his prayers to the. God of his life, and he was soothed and comforted.

THE OPPRESSION OF THE ENEMY

His complaint to God concerns spiritual rather than material foes. "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy," he cries to the most High, whom he accuses in his depression of having cast him off. The daily reproach of his opponents, "Where is thy God?" is an inward rather than an outward voice, for he was far separated from those who would do harm to him. We are sometimes prone to think that the saints of Old Testament times possessed little clear conception of the powers of the unseen world. But this is a misapprehension on our part. It is true that in the Book of Psalms the emphasis at first appears to be laid upon visible and physical foes. These the writer hated "with perfect hatred" (Psa. 139: 22), because they were also the enemies of God. But we would be wrong in limiting the thought of the psalmist to what alone could be seen. It will be remembered that Satan is introduced in the very

beginning of the Old Testament, and that he appears as the constant adversary of the people of the Lord. The facts also of possession by demons and contact with familiar spirits were well known and often referred to with reprobation by the prophets and in the Law.

Furthermore, the Book of job was written long before the time of David, and was unquestionably in his hands and those of the spiritual leaders of Israel. It was doubtless included among the Scriptures in which he meditated with great delight. In this remarkable narrative the veil of the invisible world has been drawn partly aside, and there is given a very startling view of the secret working of the great adversary who had been permitted to bring trouble upon God's champion. We see Satan so concealing his own working that the pious patriarch was actually deceived into believing that he had been set up as a mark for "the arrows of the Almighty."

Knowing these facts as they did, it is not too much to claim that David and his fellow saints realized that many at least of the bitter persecutions which they suffered originated from the same dread source that were responsible for the afflictions of job.

It is a common tendency in the present day to speak of every national calamity as "an act of God," when such should be laid, as surely as in the experience of the patriarch of Uz, at the door of the restless and malignant enemy of mankind. The permission of the Most High has been given, it is true, where such affect the Lord's people, and for this reason the writers of the Old Testament have a tendency to ascribe all things to the direct working of the divine hand. But there is, alas, among the majority of the people of God, an inability to discern in their own sufferings what is the chastening of the Lord, and what is due, in the words of the psalmist, to "the oppression of the enemy."

As a consequence, it is sad to see the numbers of earnest Christians, people like the psalmist with a heart for God, who are being beaten down to the ground, and are unable to rise again. The roll of such is increasing, and it is incumbent on pastors and Christian teachers and workers to appreciate the reality of the danger, and to meet the situation with a keen discernment of its source and a determined will for victory. Unseen wolves are entering, "not sparing the flock," and trained and fearless shepherds are needed, who can not only face the enemy with understanding and confidence, and can deliver the prey out of his mouth, but who can also repair breaches in the wall of-the folds.

THE VICTORY OF THE

BELIEVER'S COUNTENANCE

Three times in the two psalms before us, there occurs a refrain in identical language. It varies somewhat in the Authorized Version, where the translators have employed different words. In the first instance of its use (42: 5), the last three words have been attached to the following verse, having probably been so arranged in some manuscript in order to remove what to some scribe seemed an abrupt transition of thought.

The following rendition applies in all three instances (42: 5, 11; 43: 5). It is quite literal: **"Why art thou cast down, 0 my soul, And why art thou disquieted in me?**

Await God, for I shall yet praise him -

The victory of my countenance - and my God."

God is here revealed not merely as the Deliverer of the soul of the psalmist. In the existing circumstances of spiritual oppression and physical depression that would have itself been a splendid achievement of faith. Jehovah is represented in a larger way, as the Giver of victory to the countenance of the psalmist, so that his enemies fled before his face. The Lord had endued His servant with His own authority from on high, so that, as he went forward in the name of God, opposing circumstances should give way and spiritual enemies would flee apace.

This is a New Testament truth in an Old Testament setting. It is one with which every saved and sanctified believer should be familiar. The purpose of the Father provides that each child of His may be a sharer of the throne and the authority of His risen and exalted Son. Over all the power of the enemy this authority extends. It is the believer's right to bind and loose in the name of Him who has appointed him. As the psalm states it, God is Himself the Victory of the believer's countenance, so that he fears neither man, nor spirit, nor opposing circumstance.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian to understand and enter into the divine desire for our perfecting, and to claim the place with Christ, both in His

cross and resurrection and ascension, that the Father has appointed. God has reckoned each believer in His Son to have died with Him at Calvary.

"Know ye not," demands Paul (Rom. 6: 3ff.), "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Alas, it is a truth of which very few who claim the saving grace of our Lord have any practical knowledge, but it is of vital importance. All of our growth into the stature of the risen Son of man depends upon our identification with Him. "Our old man," the apostle goes on to say (v. 6), "was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be annulled" (its power over us destroyed completely and for ever). We enter into the experience of this through faith: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 11).

Then, as we positively present ourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and withdraw our members from the demands of sin, we shall find ourselves through the action of the Holy Spirit, who carries out within us the action of faith, realizing the truth of the promise (v. 14), "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

The way of the cross is the appointed path to the realization of that experimental sitting with Christ, which the Father has ordained for the believer. Our blessed Lord died at Calvary, and the bands of death being broken, He has been exalted to the right hand of the throne. There is no other way for the disciple than to be as his Lord. It is not a method of fleshly works of self-denial, but the firm belief that God does as He says, as we walk in the light of His truth. Our part is the simple entering by faith into that which has already happened at the cross, the tomb and the resurrection. We yield ourselves unto God that the Spirit may work in us that which He has revealed in His Word as His vine purpose, a purpose which He can only fulfil as we abide in the faith that He is working in us to will and do of His good pleasure. We have died with Christ.; we were buried with Him (not in the mere symbolism of water baptism, but in the apprehension of that work of the Spirit which baptism symbolizes) ; we were raised with Him in His resurrection out of that tomb in which all our sins, and the old man the root of all, were buried ; and we have been made to sit with Him in the heavenlies, at the right hand of the Father. It is in the realization which this faith brings that we come to know that the Lord has Himself become the strength of our countenance, as we see a new power working in us and through us in our ministry.

PRACTICAL VICTORY

The saint who has learned that the Lord Himself is the victory of his countenance confronts calmly and fearlessly whatever situation may arise, knowing that naught can prevail against the will that is linked with God. A firm and positive refusal that the enemy shall have any right to work in the life, or the body, or the circumstances, will bring the foe to a standstill. And, as this attitude is maintained in quiet faith, a change will come, and the attacks will lose their force. However distressing the assaults, it is possible for faith to ask of the inner life, "Why art thou cast down, 0 my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?" and to calm itself with the certain assurance, "Await God, for I shall yet praise him-the victory of my countenance -and my God.

The conflicts in our churches, in which neither party will give way, and which lower the spiritual power of the assembly, may be controlled by prayer and authority directed against those evil principalities and powers, whose working foments and continues the trouble. Individual lives, taken in the snare of the devil, depressed and hopeless, may be restored to their place of assurance, and peace, and joy in God.

Attacks on physical health, and on social relationships, and on financial matters, may often be traced to unseen workings, and thus overcome in the name of the Lord.

In a wider outlook, the international tumults which threaten the ministry of the Gospel through blocking access to needy fields and tying up the sources of financial support, must also yield to the faith that directs the weapons of God against the Satanic barriers. The countenance of Joshua was given such victory by the God of Israel that no man was able to stand before his face all the days of his life. Our wrestling, unlike that of Joshua, is not with the seven nations of Canaan, but with their spiritual counterparts. These are the forces that are responsible for every opposing world issue. They, too, shall fall before the Church of Christ, when her people, inspired and energized with a new vision of Calvary, shall rise in the name and authority of the Lord to refuse all interference with her world mission.

PRINCES WITH GOD

It was said of George Muller of Bristol, in his later years, that he bore himself

like a prince of God. So confident had his faith become through years of asking and receiving, so intimate was his communion with God from uncounted hours spent in audience with Him, that his countenance and his whole bearing manifested the dignity of a member of the royal household of heaven. The society in which we move inevitably leaves its impress upon us. This is the more true when it demands the putting forth of our highest powers to walk worthily among its members, and when we further realize that it expects us in every situation to be an honor to it. We have been made through the ministry of our gracious Lord, "Kings and priests unto his God and Father." If we believe this, and walk in the conscious light of the Lord, there cannot fail in time to be seen in us what was said of the brethren of Gideon: "Each one resembled the children of a king" (Judges 8: 18).

CHAPTER 3

The Authority Of The Rod

VICTORY OVER THE CHURCH'S FOES

Among the spiritually significant stories of the Old Testament, there are none that contain deeper teaching for the individual overcomer and the whole militant Church of Christ than those of the outflow from the smitten rock at Rephidim and the ensuing battle with Amalek, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Exodus. The lessons are so practical, they enter so deeply into the nature of the great conflict that is being fought in the heavenlies, they reveal so simply the technique of the warfare with our unseen foes, and they speak so confidently of complete and final victory, that there is little left to be said on the subject. There are other incidents in the Word which deal with differing phases of the same subject, and all are of value. But this gives the most comprehensive outline of the spiritual struggle involved, and it closes with a statement of the eternal purpose of God regarding the co-operation of His people in securing present and final triumph.

OUR HEAVENLY POSSESSIONS

Israel had come into a great and priceless possession.

Out of the smitten rock rivers of living water were flowing. They were a gift direct from the throne, abounding in life and blessing. They made possible the very existence of the people of Jehovah in the wilderness journey. The whole nation drank and was revived. There was no lack for either man or beast.

Rabbinical traditions speak of the streams following the host as it moved onward, the water flowing up the hills and down the valleys, and gathering in pools at the places of encampment. To these traditions the apostle refers (1 Cor. 10: 4), when he speaks of the people drinking of "that spiritual rock that followed them ; and that rock was Christ." In doing so, he does not give authority to the stories; his purpose is to direct attention to the Second Person of the Trinity who accompanied the nation, providing for its every need, and

graciously protecting it in danger. The fact that a second time, towards the end of the wilderness wanderings, the rock was again smitten (Num. 20), indicates the necessity for a further supply of water, and reveals the falsity of the traditions.

For us there is a wealth of spiritual meaning in the record. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," the Lord still cries unto His people. Christ at Calvary is the Smitten Rock of the New Testament Church. From His opened side flows the divine supply that satisfies every heart longing. So abundant is the fulness of the risen and living Lord, who dispenses that heavenly grace, that there is added to the invitation a wonderful promise: "He that believeth in me, out of his belly (from the depths of his inner life) shall flow rivers of living water."

That is to say, the believer who abides at the Rock, and drinks continually of its outpouring, becomes himself a channel of blessing to other thirsty souls.

OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

In the arid desert nothing is so vital as a supply of water. Sore conflicts frequently take place between the wandering tribes over the possession of a well or spring (see Gen. 26: 18ff.). It is not surprising, therefore, that the right of the people of Israel to the living streams of Rephidim was speedily contested.

The fierce tribesmen of Amalek sought to drive them away, that they themselves might enjoy the abundance of this new oasis. Skilled warriors, trained in desert fighting, they were far more than a match for the recently liberated slaves of Pharaoh.

Yet, untried as the Israelites were in warfare (Ex. 13: 17), they must lay hold of spear and buckler, and defend their heaven-bestowed blessings. The battle in itself was a hopeless one for Israel. Wherever divine interference lessened, as the weary hands of Moses drooped, "Amalek prevailed." There was no natural ability in Israel to conquer; their victory came alone through the power of that Spiritual Rock that followed them.

One of the hard lessons that must be learned by every seeker after the deeper life in Christ is that each new appropriation of heavenly grace and knowledge brings him often into a more subtle conflict. In the early stages of the Christian life, when abounding peace and joy has come in to fill the heart, and the gladness of the Lord brightens all about him, his feet are "like hinds' feet," and he feels as if

he were permanently established upon the spiritual "high places" (Habakkuk 3: 19). But, ere long, he finds himself treading the Valley of Humiliation, where Apollyon must be faced, and passing thence to the dread experiences of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where the evil ones press hard, and temptation assails with crushing force, and faith's contest with discouragement seems often a losing one.

OUR UNSEEN FOES

As still further advancement in the knowledge of the Lord is given, through the opening of the eyes of his understanding, and he finds that he has been "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," there comes the startling realization that the very heavenly places, into which he has been introduced, are the habitat of the powers of darkness. His acceptance of his seat with Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 6) "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," provides him with authority and power for full victory, so long as he maintains his place, wearing the defensive armor, and wielding the offensive weapons. But, unless at this stage of progress, there is received clear instruction as to the divine provision or overcoming, he is liable to spend many months, or even years, of fruitless struggle and defeat.

Nor can any believer escape this conflict, so long as he resolutely presses forward in the pursuit of true holiness and effective ministry. It is part of the training of the Lord's overcoming people. In the Kingdom Age, Christ has planned that they shall reign with Him from the heavenly places over the earth. It is consequently not strange that the principalities and powers, who are to be dispossessed of the seats of authority now occupied by themselves, should savagely resist their own displacement. These spiritual enemies oppose every forward step of the overcomer; they will seek to confuse his mind, sometimes drawing him into error, or into extravagance in doctrine. They may even attack him in body, or in circumstances, or through his family or his friends.

This has been their method in every age, as illustrated in the march of the hosts of Israel towards the Promised Land. Among the children of Israel the powers of darkness subtly introduced "many foolish and hurtful lusts" ; they sought to seduce them by the incoming of idolatry and fornication from the nations around; they incited them to murmuring and distrust of the providence of Jehovah ; or they openly and fiercely attacked them, as through the Amalekites. In the same manner today, by both inward and outward means, "the wiles of the

devil"

are directed to the rendering fruitless of the life and service of the individual Christian and of the aggressive church.

Many an earnest pastor weeps before the Lord because of coldness or disunion in his congregation.

The successful evangelist is disturbed by some deadening influence creeping into the atmosphere of his meetings, by which his liberty of spirit is hampered, and by which souls are hindered from coming to the Saviour. In many cases prayer does not seem to touch the difficulty, even when long continued. Nay, even prayer itself seems to be lifeless, and God afar off. At times the enemy strikes back swiftly when some special effort is aimed against him. Workers break down, sickness weakens the frame, spiritual purpose slackens, and discouragement throws a pall of darkness that depresses every effort for the Lord. Such experiences are far from uncommon, as many will testify.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE ROD

What is the significance of the Rod as it appears in the ministry of Moses? The usual interpretation is that it symbolizes prayer. But there is no mention of prayer in the incident before us, and in a somewhat similar case (Ex. 14: 15ff.), the Lawgiver is sharply told that the time is past for calling on God, and that definite action is needed. There is a richer and more powerful meaning: the rod symbolizes the authority o f God committed to human hands. By it the holder is made a co-ruler with his Lord, sharing His throne-power, and reigning with Him.

It is a vision that staggers the faith of many. But it is a Scriptural revelation of divine truth, that is repeated in many places and in many forms. The overcoming saint is made a king and priest unto God (Rev. 1: 6), that he may reign on the earth (Rev. 5: 10). He is given authority over the nations (Rev. 2: 26ff.), co-operating with the risen Christ. He sits with the exalted Lord in the heavenly places (Eph. 1: 20), which is the center of the authority of the universe.

In this position of privilege he is enthroned with Christ "far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come."

This is meant to be a present experience of faith, though its full development

will be reached in the age which is before us. Let us not dishonor the Word of God that reveals these things, by the unbelieving attitude that it means less than it has dearly stated.

All through the day, "until the going down of the sun," Moses held out the rod over the valley in which Israel strove with Amalek. Was he praying? There is little doubt that his heart was lifted to God in unceasing supplication for the untrained soldiers of his people. But his holding out of the rod was a demonstration of the authority committed to him over the unseen forces which drove forward the Amalekites, and which operate behind every battle (see Dan. 10: 13, 20). Not in the visible, but in the invisible, lies the secret of success or failure. Over the spirit-foes of Israel, which sought to thwart the purpose of God, and to hold back His people from the land of their inheritance, Moses exercised the authority vested in him as the representative of Jehovah. By his sustained resistance to these mighty principalities and powers, their ability to aid the Amalekites was nullified. And, as the sun went down, the beaten tribesmen sullenly withdrew.

The principle holds in every conflict between the people of God and their enemies. Where redeemed man is concerned, the Father calls him into a ministry of authority with His Son, the rightful Ruler of earth. In the Old Testament, some remarkable instances occur, such as that of Joshua at Ajalon (Josh. 10: 12), or that of Elijah (1 Kings 17: 1), where the prophet boldly declared that "there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word."

In those past ages, however, the authority was limited to a few select souls, upon whom the Spirit came for special ministries. But the New Testament saints of the heavenly places include all who are raised up with Christ, and who have accepted the death of the cross, and the burial of the tomb, that they may attain unto the resurrection of which Paul speaks (Phil. 3: 11). For them there is a fellowship with the Risen Christ in a larger sense than others know. To them the powers of darkness yield wherever their authority is exerted.

THE HAND UPON THE THRONE

"Jehovah hath sworn," reads the Revised Version, "Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." The first clause is not correctly translated. "A hand is lifted up upon the throne of Jehovah," the Hebrew reads. The lifting up of the hand is a form of affirmation or oath, and from this comes

the rendering, "Jehovah hath sworn." The meaning is to be found in the action of Moses. Lifting up his hand holding the rod, he took authority in the name of Jehovah over the foes of God's people. In his capacity as the representative of Jehovah he was exerting the authority of the throne when he lifted up his hand. It was a declaration of divine judgment to be executed upon Amalek and upon the demon-powers who energized those cruel warriors in their enmity against Israel.

So, to-day, every consecrated hand that lifts the rod of the authority of the Lord against the unseen powers, of darkness is directing the throne-power of Christ against Satan and his hosts in a battle that will last until "the going down of the sun," that is, until life's day is ended. Paul prayed (Eph. 1: 17) that "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (Christ) " might be granted to the saints to whom he wrote. Thus would the eyes of their understanding be opened to see their full relationship to the risen and exalted Christ. Let us cry unto God this same petition for ourselves and for all the people of the Lord.