

THE REMARKABLE REPLACEMENT ARMY



An allegory from the past - pointing to a
vibrant Christian lifestyle for the future

STAN FIRTH

DEDICATION

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The significance of the Front Cover Photograph is explained at an appropriate point in the text.

Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

I dedicate this book to Mavis, who has been a wonderful wife to me for forty-three years (so far!) Though I myself wrote the book, most of its contents have been a joint discovery, as we have gone through life together, in Jesus. It is impossible to say which insights were mine, which were hers, and which came to us as a couple. What's more, she has put up with me hiding myself in my study for many hours over the years that it has taken to complete. (Very soon I must get down to her list of jobs – for the completion of which she has waited with incredible patience!)

Also, I dedicate the book to our three children and their spouses – all six of whom we not only love, but also greatly admire – and to our young grandchildren, who are, naturally, very special to us. We trust that, especially when we ourselves have finished 'fighting the good fight', both these generations of our family will find this book to be a valuable legacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book begins with a prophecy, so I have to acknowledge right away that its basic outline was given to me, rather than being ‘all my own work’. (You will see exactly what I mean by that, as you go through the book!)

I did, of course, have to decide, chapter by chapter, and sentence by sentence, how to put into words what I was sensing, and to check that what I was writing was both true to the great principles that run through Scripture, and true to life. In that demanding task I was greatly helped by contact with a wide variety of sincere and enthusiastic Christian people, from many countries and many backgrounds, with whom I was able to converse about the lifestyle to which we are called by our Lord, and whose understanding of Scripture, and experience of Christian living I was able to draw upon. For reasons that I shall explain within the text, I have been in contact, either face-to-face or by letter and e-mail, with a much wider range of believers than I would normally have come across. To everyone who inspired me, or caused me to re-examine the Scriptures, I owe a great debt of gratitude.

At various stages of writing, I gave what I had written up to that point, to a number of good friends who read through the text and made helpful comments, of both a practical, and what I would call a ‘theological’, nature. Even that group is too numerous to mention by name, but I want them to know that I valued their comments highly, and I hope they can see their mark on the final product!

Two good friends made important contributions towards getting the final copy ready for the printers. One was Robert Stockwell, who painstakingly did the proof-reading (as he did for my previous book a dozen years ago). The other was Tim Poulton, who did the entire preparation of the text in the specific way that an internet publisher requires – actually an enormously time-consuming task. He went the second mile by designing the cover. I am hugely grateful for Tim’s technical know-how, and his cheerful and ever-willing co-operation and to his wife, Tarryn (for putting up with it all!)

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PART ONE:

*A PROLOGUE AND A
PROPHECY*

CHAPTER 1: STARTING WITH A STORY

Most Christian people are familiar with the practice of “starting with a story”. A speaker, or a writer, begins by narrating a series of events, or describing a situation, and then goes on to use this introduction as an illustration for the insights he wants to pass on. A story – of some kind or other – is the launching-pad of a great many talks and sermons and magazine-articles and books.

I am going to start *this* book with a true story from the pages of History. As I see it, this particular story is a helpful analogy for everything else I want to say. It is a good metaphor for my message. It is an appropriate prologue to the rest of the book.

Generally speaking, “starting stories” are commendably short – two or three minutes, if they are given by word-of-mouth; or two or three paragraphs, if it is written material. In this case, however, I had better confess right away that I will need *two whole chapters* to weave the ins-and-outs of my symbolic tale!

That won’t present any problem to those of you who have already read my previous book – the one entitled “Custom and Command”. I am pretty sure that you folks will catch my drift in the opening sentences, and understand what I am getting-at all the way through. In fact, those of you who identified personally with the contents of “Custom and Command” will, I think, be quite intrigued by the illustration as it unfolds.

Even if you haven’t actually read my earlier writing, but you live a lifestyle similar to the one described in “Custom and Command”, I am confident that you will relate easily to this introduction – even if it is a little longer than is usual. I predict that, before you are very far into Chapter Two, you will spot *yourselves* in my analogy, and may well become quite interested in finding out what I think is going to happen to you!

The only readers I am a little worried about, are those of you who have got hold of this book, but have no knowledge whatever of the issues raised in my previous book. I suspect that some of you ‘newcomers’ may, at first, find parts of my opening story somewhat puzzling. In places, what I am hinting-at will, I think, be apparent to everyone. In other places, however, the meaning of the metaphors may not be immediately obvious.

If, for any reason, you don’t always see what I am getting-at in the course of the next two chapters, can I urge you to bear with me till I complete my introductory illustration? I promise you that, as soon as I finish the actual story, I shall make sure that my meaning is crystal clear to all readers. Although this book is, in some ways, a ‘companion volume’ to the other book I have written, I want it to be able to be understood on its own. So, well before the end of the opening section, everyone will know exactly what direction I am going to take in the pages ahead.

* * * * *

I am going to tell this story in two phases. I have decided to call the first phase “The Soldiers-in-Waiting”, and the second phase “The Remarkable Replacement Army”.

Incidentally, I believe that, for every reader (both those who are familiar with my earlier writing, and those who are not) it’s worth remembering that this is a *true story*. It is not something which I have dreamed-up to suit my purposes. It is fact, not fiction. The events I am going to describe in the next two chapters *really did happen...*

CHAPTER 2: THE “SOLDIERS-IN-WAITING”

Many years ago now, there was a king – an honourable and good king – whose army began to fail badly. It had never been a perfect army of course, but, in the past, it had been responsible for some fine achievements. It had warded off hostile forces which had threatened the nation, and had made several other very positive contributions also. It is fair to say that this army had often been a power-for-good in the land.

When my story begins, however, the king’s army seemed to be falling apart. A strong and unscrupulous enemy had, somewhat unexpectedly, mounted a major attack on the country concerned, and was making massive advances. The various regiments and battalions were proving almost completely ineffective. Here and there, there were units which still seemed to be fighting well, and making headway – but, eventually, even those bright lights were extinguished. In due course, both the long-established regiments of the king’s army, and those introduced in more recent years, disintegrated altogether – and the enemy occupied the entire country, making its unwholesome presence felt in every corner of the nation.

The king, however, had not the slightest intention of accepting defeat – even though everything he stood-for appeared to have suffered a huge setback. He knew full well that the regiments were not really constituted to withstand such a violent attack from the enemy. The result was that, even before the final collapse of his existing army, he had begun to work towards the formation of what I would call a “replacement army”.

In this enterprise, the king was greatly helped by the fact that, scattered throughout his realm, there was a surprising number of “retired” soldiers. I have put the word “retired” into inverted commas because I do not mean “retired on account of age”. The men I am

talking about were certainly not “past it”. They were fighting-fit. Neither do I mean “retired because no longer interested”. These men were as committed as ever to serving their king. But they had withdrawn from their regiments so that they could, as they saw it, serve him more effectively. Let me explain:

Whenever loyal soldiers-of-the-king realised that the existing battalions and regiments were no longer the way forward for the king’s cause, they were faced with a challenging dilemma. On the one hand, they could fight-on with their units to the bitter end. That would certainly satisfy long-cherished ideas of what soldiers are supposed to do, if they are loyal and brave. On the other hand – impelled by a growing awareness that the king was going to introduce some kind of new force to oppose the enemy – they could try to return to ordinary life, and await further orders from their royal Commander-in-Chief.

At this particular juncture in history, a surprising number of soldiers chose that second option. In some instances, far-seeing officers in senior positions instructed their men to disband and get ready for something new. More often than not, however, in the uncertainties of impending defeat, soldiers had to decide for themselves what to do. Would the king be best served if they struggled on till they were eventually captured by the enemy, or killed – or was there another solution? As time went on, more and more of them became convinced that the old-style army methods were finished, and made their way back (often with considerable difficulty and hardship) to their home-towns and home-villages. Some of you, on reading this, may consider such men to have been “deserters” – but I can assure you that, in the actual situation, neither the king, nor indeed the citizens of the country, regarded them in that way.

There were, of course, actual deserters around also (as there always are in such circumstances) – individuals who had worn the uniform, but had never really been motivated by allegiance to the royal commander or what he stood for. When the going gets tough, there are always some half-hearted soldiers who make a run for it. It was widely recognised, however, that those who had left

the regiments *while still maintaining a genuine commitment to the king’s cause* were in a different category altogether. They definitely weren’t thought-of as deserters; they were considered, rather, to be “soldiers-in-waiting”.

In this way, it came about that the king had a ‘pool’ of devoted troops from which to form the replacement-army he had in mind. As the situation with the original regiments became worse, the ‘pool’ grew larger. More and more officers and men – people who had been steadfastly loyal to their regiments, some of them for many years – began to see that the only realistic course-of-action was to become a ‘soldier-in-waiting’.

From quite early on in these events, a special agent from the king began to appear in many districts of the occupied land. He did this undercover, and inconspicuously, but effectively nonetheless. He increasingly involved the ‘soldiers-in-waiting’ in the king’s further plans. As time passed, a great many civilians also (to whom the lifestyle of the *old* regiments had never appealed) were drawn into the king’s new force.

Slowly, but surely, the replacement army began to take shape – very different from anything which had gone before, but well-suited to the demanding conditions which had developed. *As the struggle between the king on the one hand, and the forces ranged against him on the other hand, built up to a climax, this remarkable body turned out to have a crucial part to play.*

* * * * *

In this chapter, I have given you the bare bones of the opening stages of this unusual chain-of-events. I still want to tell you, however, about what happened in the long run. That is going to involve explaining where and when, exactly, all this took place – which is possibly something a number of you have been curious about! In Chapter 3, therefore, I shall zoom-in much more closely on these developments, and introduce you properly to this mysterious

'Replacement Army' to which I keep referring.

CHAPTER 3: THE REMARKABLE REPLACEMENT ARMY

The events I described in the previous chapter didn't happen as long ago as you might think. They actually took place within the lifetime of at least some of you who are reading this book! The time: the middle years of the twentieth century. The setting: the beautiful country of Norway.

In the spring of 1940, Adolf Hitler launched a savage attack on neutral Norway. Sadly, it didn't take him too long to establish his supremacy – but it was by no means a “walk-over”. When, for instance, the Nazi navy sailed aggressively up the Oslo Fjord, it was forced, temporarily, to turn tail. A small – and rather ancient – artillery battery scored a direct hit on the leading enemy cruiser, which then sank unceremoniously to the bottom of the fjord! Even the troops marching on the Norwegian capital were held off long enough for the entire gold-reserves of the nation to be removed from the vaults of the Central Bank, and taken abroad, so that the Fuehrer wouldn't get his hands on them!

Incidents like these made a genuine contribution to the fight against Hitler, but they did not stop the forward advance of his troops. The Nazi war-machine moved inexorably onwards, and, in due course, the swastika was flying in every corner of the land. One by one, each of the honoured regiments of the Royal Norwegian Army had to admit defeat.

The King of Norway, however, was personally determined that, within his country, resistance to the Enemy should continue unabated. For that reason – even before traditional military resistance had entirely collapsed – he began to think about the setting-up of *an appropriate alternative to his earlier regiments*.

He knew, of course, that the mammoth task of finally overcoming the Enemy would require something much more than troops drawn from among his own citizens. For the ultimate victory, he knew he would need to be backed by a Mega-Army from overseas. What he was looking for from his 'replacement army' was a force which could serve his purposes within Norway itself, until the great Day of Deliverance arrived. (That was all he had ever looked for from his original army – successful operations within Norway itself.)

What the King decided upon was very simple, and yet remarkably effective. He saw that the best possible answer to the situation was to have, in every locality, an informal group of citizens who were unquestionably devoted to himself and his cause, and willing to carry out any orders which came from his headquarters. They wouldn't have uniforms or barracks, but they would have the specific aim of counteracting the Enemy at every possible opportunity. For his part, the King promised to supply them with all the guidance and equipment they needed for the task.

Thus was born the Norwegian Resistance. It was low-profile, but high-achieving. Winston Churchill referred to it as "The Secret Army". Others called it the "Underground Movement". My own term, "The Replacement Army", has its value also – *because the appropriate alternative to the King's earlier regiments had been found!*

By sending a Special Agent to each locality, the King slowly began to build up his new-style army. The Agent made contact with those "soldiers-in-waiting" I told you about in the opening chapter – those loyal troops who, having chosen to move away from regimental warfare, were eagerly looking for some new outlet for their commitment. They were the obvious recruits for the King's replacement army; a solid foundation for the resistance he wanted to mount.

At the same time, however, the unobtrusive (but very active) Agent would make approaches to civilians. As a result, many 'ordinary' Norwegian men and women, who had not previously shown any interest in traditional Army service, also committed themselves

wholeheartedly to the King, and were drawn into his new force.

In due course, therefore, the King of Norway had an extensive network of resisters, scattered throughout the whole nation: a suitable follow-up to his disbanded regiments – a genuine 'Replacement Army' to serve his cause, within his country, until the great day when he would return in triumph.

* * * * *

There is, of course, no getting away from the fact that what I have called the "replacement army" was, in certain respects, very different from what had gone before.

In the first place, as I have already mentioned, there were no barracks – no specific focal-points for any of the local detachments of resisters. Consequently, there were seldom any summonses to be "on parade" as a whole group. There was plenty of inter-relating between the resisters, but it was done in an entirely informal way.

Secondly, although Churchill constantly encouraged others to refer to the Resistance as an 'army', the set-up did *not* have the familiar "chain of command", with officers at various levels, and "other ranks"! In every district, those faithful to the king looked for leadership, not to some of their own number who had been promoted to responsibility, but to the King's Special Agent whom he had sent into their midst from his Headquarters overseas. (There were influential figures of course, and role-models – but not an 'officer class' as such.) Later on I shall explain, more precisely, how this worked out.

Finally, there were none of the usual military campaigns – the high-profile, large-scale, activities which are usually associated with a regimental-style army. The work was done almost entirely in undercover operations, by individuals or by small groups, normally working just where they were, within the setting of their everyday lives.

Do not be deceived, however, into thinking that this was some kind of ‘mickey-mouse’ Movement. The verdict of History is that the Norwegian Resistance did an impressive job right to the end of the struggle.

At various points as this book continues (and especially in Part Three) I shall be mentioning some of the actual tasks the men and women of the resistance-network undertook. I shall refer, for instance, to some of the many rescue operations in which they engaged – operations which extricated large numbers of unfortunate individuals from the clutches of the Gestapo. I shall explain some of the daring, but well-thought-out, ways in which they weakened the Enemy’s military strength. I shall relate how, with their secret radios, their ‘underground’ newspapers, and their well-directed conversations, they kept Truth before the Norwegian people – as opposed to the lies and propaganda of the occupying regime. I shall give you glimpses, at least, of the many ways they counter-acted and negated the oppressions of the Nazis, and maintained the royal cause throughout the land. All in all, these gutsy folk served their King, and their fellow-men, with great distinction and with considerable success.

Though the resisters did not operate along the lines favoured by the traditional regiments, and though they were very much a mixed bunch (involving both the experienced and the inexperienced), what they achieved during the struggle gave them the right to be considered a genuine Army. It has to be admitted that it was a rather different Army from what had gone before, but it was an Army all the same. It was a Replacement Army – a *Remarkable Replacement Army*.

The story of this unusual-but-admirable force came to a glorious conclusion on the wonderful day in 1945 when, backed by the victories of the Mega-Army which gave Hitler his final come-uppance, the King of Norway triumphantly returned from exile to his beautiful but battered land. Then a new story began, as the whole country was restored to what had been intended from the beginning.

* * * * *

The chain-of-events I have just described is, I believe, a kind of parable, or allegory, of the future of the Christian Church...

I prophesy that the existing regiments of the Army of the King-of-Kings (the various denominations and “streams” which currently make up the Church) are going to disintegrate, sooner or later, during the 21st Century. Already I see many signs of that. Furthermore, although there are individual churches, and groups of churches, which at the moment are, to all intents and purposes, “fighting well”, I suggest that even they, in the long run, will all but disappear from the scene. I prophesy that the days of the Institutional Church are drawing to a close.

I do not believe, however, that the King-of-Kings is discouraged – even though many Christians view the deteriorating situation with dismay. I am sure that He has known all along that these organisations are not constituted to withstand the end-time onslaughts of the forces-of-evil. At the same time, there is no way that He will leave Himself without a body of “soldiers of Christ” to further His cause on Earth.

My prediction is that, as the 21st Century unfolds, the King-of-Kings will come to be represented by an Army of a radically different style from the Army which has previously represented Him. I prophesy that He will replace His formal Army (His formal Church) with an informal network of dedicated believers – a veritable “resistance movement” of committed Christians.

This 'Replacement Army' will have its beginnings in the many faithful 'soldiers-in-waiting' who have already moved away from their institutionalised churches and are, at this very time, eagerly looking to see what their Lord and Commander wants of them next. As time goes on, they will be joined by more and more of their fellow-Christians from within the declining churches, and also by new Christians drawn from among the so-called 'unchurched'.

In this new set-up, there will be no church buildings, and no division between "clergy" and "laity"(or whatever you like to call that very real two-tier system which always seems to develop in church circles). Such a change will not, however, result in believers who refuse to be 'under authority' – people who are just 'doing their own thing'. It will result, rather, in believers who have discovered, in depth, what the Bible means by its frequent references to Christians being "led by the Spirit". God will, without question, continue to use role-models, and people of helpful influence. Nevertheless, I prophesy that Heaven's own "Special Agent" – the Holy Spirit – will be the key figure in every locality.

As with the Norwegian Resistance, the Church of the Future will be something of a "Secret Army" – low-profile but high-achieving. It will not have the public visibility which the Church has enjoyed in many parts of the World in past centuries. Nevertheless, as with the Resistance, fellow-citizens will quickly realise that earnest followers-of-the-King are in their midst. The work of Christ's "Replacement Army" will be done almost entirely in 'undercover operations', by individuals or by small groups, normally working just where they are, within the setting of their everyday lives. But I prophesy that it will be effective work – work which will bring joy and satisfaction to the Lord, and much blessing and

deliverance, of one kind or another, to many needy people.

*In due course, the glorious day will come when, backed by a mega-force which is beyond our imaginings, the Lord of Hosts will return to His World. Then, at last, Evil will get its final come-uppance, and the 'Restoration of All Things' will be accomplished. I do not know when that will be, but my over-all prophesy is this: **WHETHER IT BE LONG OR SHORT, THE CLOSING ERA OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WILL BE THE ERA OF THE "REPLACEMENT ARMY"**.*

Note: Some of you may have heard of a theory called 'Replacement Theology', and you may have been (rightly) informed that it is a very dodgy theory indeed! That may put you off my prophecy of a 'Replacement Army'. However, that false 'Theology' talks about God replacing People whom He has chosen, whereas I am talking merely about His replacing a Framework or a System. (I explain this in a little more detail towards the end of chapter 11.)

CHAPTER 4: THIS PROPHECY IS SUPPORTED BY A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF EVIDENCE!

I have had these ‘prophetic thoughts’ on my heart for quite a number of years now, but, for much of that time, I was rather unsure about whether or not I should be putting them into printed form – whether or not I was right to offer them to other Christians.

There was a good reason for my hesitancy. To be perfectly honest, I have found prophecy among Christians, as I have experienced it over the last three decades anyway, to have been *rather a mixed bag!* Admittedly, I have heard (or read) some prophecies which have, in due course, proved to be amazingly accurate. I do not doubt that true prophecy *can* appear among us. However, I have also heard, or read, ‘prophecies’ which have turned out to be completely off-beam. Towards the new Millennium, for instance, many statements were made (often by fine, well-respected, Christians) which claimed to be the Lord’s Word to us, concerning that particular juncture in History. When the time came, however, much of what had been prophesied didn’t materialise!

I am sure that, like me, many of you who are reading this book will also have experienced the ‘patchy’ track-record of prophecy in modern times. If you have, you will understand why I went through a stage of being uncertain about sharing my own ‘prophetic insights’. If others could get it wrong, how could I be certain that I had something genuine to say? What if I were to lead others astray? What if my prophecy was really a ‘false prophecy’?

Then one day I suddenly noticed, in the New Testament, some teaching which indicates that prophecy can be “weighed” – in order to find out whether it is false or not.

I had read the particular passage of Scripture often enough before, but it suddenly dawned on me that it was highly relevant to my own dilemma.

You will find the teaching I am referring to in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in Chapter 14. In that particular section of his letter, Paul is actively encouraging Christian people, if they have a strong sense of having something 'prophetic' to say, to go ahead and say it! In fact, as he completes his teaching on the subject, he puts it this way: (verse 39) "Brothers, be *eager* to prophecy".

Paul obviously realises, however, that mistakes can be made with regard to prophecy. Christian people – usually with the best possible intentions – can get carried away, and put forward either some wishful thinking, or even just notions which have developed in their own imaginations. So, in verse 29 of 1st Corinthians, chapter 14, Paul advises that all prophecies appearing among us should be "WEIGHED CAREFULLY".

Paul has borrowed the language he uses here from the Courts of Law. He is talking about the practice of weighing evidence in a courtroom. An essential part of any Justice System is to check that there is solid evidence to support an allegation. *By the same token, Paul is saying, an essential part of the Christian Scene is to check that there is solid evidence to support a prophecy, if one appears in our midst.*

Do you see how this helped me? It's not that Paul was suggesting that the person giving the prophecy should be responsible for producing evidence. Not at all. But the fact that prophecy could be 'weighed' meant that, if I wanted to, I could check in advance whether my particular prophecy had any real substance to it or not. If I couldn't find much confirmation anywhere, I realised I would be better to keep my ideas to myself. If, on the other hand, there was a reasonable amount of supportive evidence, I felt I would be justified in laying my prophecy before my fellow-Christians for their consideration.

As soon as I realised that prophecy could be 'weighed', I began to keep my eyes open for evidence – evidence that would either corroborate, or contradict, this picture of the future which had formed in my mind. I looked at various sources which the Bible mentions as being important in our search for truth about the days ahead. The more I went on, the more confident I became that I could honourably speak out this prophecy. In fact, by the time I had completed my 'weighing', I was fully convinced that I had a definite *duty* to make available, in print, what I have written in Chapters 1 to 3 of this book. I knew it was right for me to publish the prophecy that was on my heart.

* * * * *

Part Two of this book contains a selection of the evidence that I have been gathering over the last few years – the evidence that has led me to put the "Remarkable Replacement Army Prophecy" into print. No matter what your initial reaction to that prophecy has been – "False", "True" or "Don't Know" – I think it is very important that you should read Part Two. Let me tell you why I think this is the case...

When judges, or members-of-a-jury, hear a basic charge read out in court, they quite often get a 'gut-feeling' about the likely result. (This is especially so if details of the case have been in the news beforehand.) A fair number of those involved in deciding court-cases instinctively form an early opinion about the situation that is unfolding before them. *However, no self-respecting judge, or jury-member, would ever dream of saying: "I already know what I think, so I won't bother to listen to any further evidence."* No one could, with a good conscience, either convict someone, or acquit someone, without being totally sure they had properly considered everything relevant, on both sides of the case.

Now, surely Christians need to decide about prophecy in the same way as an honest judge, or jury-person, decides about a court case. No right-thinking believer could condemn a prophecy as "false", having resolutely refused to consider any evidence that pointed in

the opposite direction! In the same way, even if followers-of-Christ have a ‘gut-feeling’ that a prophecy is true, surely they have a duty, not only to listen to contrary evidence, but also to examine the supportive evidence thoroughly?

I would almost go as far as to claim that Part Two of this book is ‘essential reading’ for anyone who has read Part One! First of all, I believe Part Two is necessary for those of you who already feel, quite strongly, that the prophecy is false. If you consider it erroneous, you will obviously want to warn fellow-Christians: “Beware of this book!” However, if you are going to condemn the book in the hearing of others, then you must be able to say: “I have carefully weighed *all* the evidence I can find (including the author’s) and *only after that* do I reject this so-called prophecy.” Unless you actually weigh my evidence in the balance, and find it ‘wanting’, you cannot be absolutely sure that you are right to reject what I am saying.

Secondly, I believe Part Two could be a great help to those of you who, at the moment, don’t know *what* to think. I don’t blame you if you feel somewhat confused. However, I suspect that, if you weigh the evidence-material I have gathered, you will find the balance of your thoughts clearly tipping one way or the other.

Thirdly, I firmly believe that Part Two is essential reading for those of you who already feel reasonably convinced that my prophecy is true. I am convinced that, if you are going to let this prophecy influence your future Christian discipleship in any way, you must check properly that you are not being hoodwinked into following a false prophecy.

I think it possible that some of you (in any of the three ‘categories I have mentioned: ‘false’, ‘true’ and ‘don’t know’) may feel that having to decide whether a prophecy is true or false is rather a tall order for the average Christian. “Because of that,” you might be thinking, “we will leave the job to our leaders. We will let the theologians among us decide, and accept what *they* have to say.”

If that is how you feel, I must call your attention to something

else the Apostle Paul mentions in verse 29 of 1st Corinthians 14 (the verse where he teaches that prophecies should be ‘carefully weighed’). Paul is actually envisaging a situation where a number of Christians are gathered together, and where more than one prophecy might be given. The full text of what he says is this: “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said”. Notice that phrase: “the others”. By that he means everyone else present, in addition to the person who prophesied. In other words: *all those who heard the prophecy!* There is no mention of the leaders doing the weighing – no mention of the task being left to those with theological training.

Our national Jury Systems assume that ‘ordinary people’ are capable of making a judgement on the evidence that is presented in a criminal case. Similarly, the Apostle Paul teaches that ‘ordinary Christians’, if they put their minds to it, are well able, by God’s grace, to make a judgement on evidence that is presented in a ‘prophecy case’! Read Part Two, then – and draw your own conclusions.....

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A FOOTNOTE – FOR READERS WHO FEEL THEY WOULD LIKE TO ‘SKIP’ PART TWO (EVEN TEMPORARILY) AND GO STRAIGHT TO PART THREE (“ENCOURAGEMENTS AND CHALLENGES FOR RECRUITS”). (*If you have no such feelings, you don’t need to read this ‘footnote’! Simply go on to Chapter 5.*)

The thought has come to me that some readers – readers who already feel an attitude of acceptance for the prophecy, and are already thinking of themselves as ‘recruits in the Replacement Army’ – may be more interested, at this precise moment, in learning what might be involved in their new lifestyle, than in ‘double-checking’ what they already believe to be true. Even some of you who “don’t know what to think” might consider it more helpful, at this stage, to look at the more detailed picture of ‘The-Future-of-the-Church’ that is contained in Part Three, rather than simply to build up confirmation of the limited ‘outline’ picture that you have been given in Part One.

If you feel strongly along either of those two lines, I would, in fact, encourage you to miss out Part Two for the present – provided you are absolutely clear that this must be a temporary measure. Let me give you a couple of analogies that may help you to understand why I would support this rather unusual procedure.

There are, occasions (certainly here in the UK) where individuals are permitted to postpone jury service. If, for instance, you are about to have a baby, or to sit an examination, or to fulfil a business contract, you can be – temporarily – excused from the duty of hearing evidence in a criminal case. There is no way, however, that you are permanently “off the hook”! As soon as you have completed whatever it was that allowed you to postpone, you become, as a citizen of your country, fully liable once again for jury service. Similarly, I believe it would be right for some readers, if they feel they would benefit from a ‘period of further study’ on the subject of the Church of the Future (such as is offered in Part Three of this book), to postpone their ‘jury service’ (the weighing of the prophecy, discussed in Part Two), and come back to it later.

A better analogy, possibly, is the example of a couple searching for a house to buy. Every couple knows perfectly well that, at some point before they actually buy, they will need to have a proper survey done, to ensure that, structurally, the property is in good order. However, in the excitement of feeling that the place might indeed be what they have been looking for – or even the vague feeling that it has possibilities – their immediate priority is to take a good look round the property. They want to linger for a bit in each room; they want to check out the various facilities; they want to picture themselves living there. Very few couples would be so foolish as to sign up for the new house without having a thorough survey done at some stage, but it is perfectly understandable that they should want to take time to browse round the whole place first. When they have done that, they will go back to the essential business of the survey.

To those, then, whose ‘gut-feeling’ is that the prophecy is true, and even to some among those who don’t yet know what to think, I would say: “It’s perfectly in order for you, if you want to, to delay

a survey of the ‘foundational credentials’ of this new ‘house’ you are thinking of moving into, until you have had a good look round – provided you *do* get that survey done, before you take the serious step of actually ‘moving in’.

If you start living in the ways described in Part Three, sooner or later other believers are going to accuse you of basing your Christian life on a ‘false prophecy’. It is highly important, therefore, that you become familiar, at some point, with the supportive material contained in Part Two. *On then now – if that is what you want – to Part Three; but be prepared, when you get to the end, to take up your ‘jury service’ again, and read through Part Two.*

PART TWO:

*SOME 'WEIGHING' OF
THE PROPHECY*

SECTION I: WEIGHING THE PROPHECY WITH “SIGNS
OF THE TIMES”

CHAPTER 5:
“SIGNS-OF-THE-TIMES” IN
BRITAIN AND EUROPE

I have found three types of ‘evidence’, mentioned in the New Testament, that someone who needs to ‘weigh’ a prophecy should be looking for. I want to begin with a type of evidence that the Lord Jesus himself clearly rated as being quite important. I am referring to what He called “signs of the times”.

In the Gospels, we find Jesus expressing disappointment that, all too often, the People of God don’t make much effort to learn lessons from what is going on round about them. In Matthew 16 verses 1-3, for instance, He is addressing a group of Scribes and Pharisees: “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky,” He tells them, “but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” Then, in Luke 12:54-57, He is speaking to a crowd of ‘ordinary’ people – but saying more or less the same thing: “How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time? Why don’t you judge for yourselves?”

Clearly, Jesus wants us all (scholars and ‘ordinary’ Christians) to look at what is going on round about us, in contemporary events, to help us make judgements about the future. I believe that, in these early years of the 21st Century, there are trends that we should be noting – especially with regard to the opening stages of the prophecy I laid before you. There are “signs of the times” which are worthy of our consideration.

In this present chapter, and the following one, I am going to

concentrate on signs-of-the-times in Britain and Europe. After that, I shall look further afield. (There is a good reason for my starting off with Britain. Britain is where I was born, and where I have always lived. It is the country I know best. It is also the country from which at least half the readership of my previous book was drawn.) However, my own homeland is only a starting point. Before this chapter is finished, I shall have already widened my enquiry to the continent of Europe; and, by the time we reach chapter 7, I shall be considering what is happening in various other parts of the world.

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Not all that long ago, I opened a copy of “The Times” and saw this startling headline: “CHURCH OF ENGLAND ‘FACING OBLIVION’”. These words came from a report that had just been issued by a Church “think-tank”. The report also included phrases such as “a catastrophic decline in the number of churchgoers”; “experiencing decline on all significant fronts”; and “other denominations are struggling too”. The newspaper’s religious-affairs correspondent summed up the report in these words: “Without urgent action, the Church of England will cease to exist, in recognisable form, in 50 years.”

In Scotland, a set of statistics for all the principal denominations appeared in the national press at the start of the new millennium. These statistics appeared to show that, if the decrease in membership continued at the existing rate, the national “Church of Scotland” (Presbyterian) would *disappear altogether* by the middle of the century. Of the other well-known denominations, the Baptists were predicted to stagger on longest – till 2080, it was thought – and then to become completely defunct.

Now, I would be the first to agree that statistics, and newspapers too, often need to be taken with a large dose of salt. Nevertheless, it would be foolish for Christian people, in either England or Scotland, to deny that membership-numbers for the long-established Churches are plummeting at an alarming rate - fuelled, no doubt, by the various high-profile theological controversies that bitterly

divide their adherents. Very genuine trends were being highlighted in these newspaper articles. (I should also mention that, since coming across these particular articles, I have seen plenty more in a similar vein. These are not isolated reports.)

There are, of course, some notable exceptions to these general trends: individual denominational-churches which have a definite air of progress; where young people are enthusiastic; and numbers are undoubtedly growing. I promise that I shall discuss these exceptions further, as we go on. For now, however, I simply want to make this point: looking at the over-all situation, there does appear to be quite a lot of evidence to suggest that, here in Britain, the age-old forms of Christianity are on a very slippery downward slope. *The time-honoured regiments of the Army-of-the-King-of-Kings are unquestionably under threat.*

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This sharp decline in the strength of the institutional Church has already gone much further on the continent of Europe. There, the mass desertions from the various “regiments” of Christ’s “Army” began with the Second World War, and have gathered pace ever since. I read recently that the average Sunday attendance at Lutheran churches in Germany had sunk to 23! To be honest, there don’t seem to be genuinely encouraging statistics for any of the major Protestant denominations, in any of the European countries.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Roman Catholics in Europe claimed to have, so far as church-attendance and membership-totals go, a much better record than the Protestants. *Now, however, their numbers are also in sharp decline.* Superficially, that is not always obvious. In April 2005, for instance, when the popular Pope John Paul II died after 26 years at the helm, several million mourners converged on Rome for his funeral. It seemed, for a brief moment, as if numbers were not really a problem. If one looks under the surface, however, what I call “sharp decline” is an *accurate* description of what has been gradually happening to the Roman

Catholic Church in many European nations.

For example, I have before me some details of a study recently made in Spain. The study was initiated by a government-sponsored “Centre for Social Investigation”. It found that two and a half million Spaniards had left the (R.C.) Church in the previous four years. It commented that, in 1975, 61% regularly attended church, whereas, thirty years later, the percentage has dropped to fewer than 19%! The number of priests had fallen from almost 78,000 in 1951 to just over 18,000 at the time of the report.

From most other European countries, also, there comes information indicating that the melting-away of support for Catholicism has already gone as far as it has in Spain – in some countries, even farther. When the new Pope was elected in 2005, I noticed that many commentators said that one of the priority tasks facing him would be “the huge decline in church-attendance in Western Europe”.

Until recently, there were two European countries that still had had the reputation of being *staunchly* Roman-Catholic. The first of these was Poland – and Poland continues to be something of an exception to the steep decline of the Catholic Church elsewhere. The other country that was always thought of as being staunchly Roman Catholic was the Republic of Ireland. There, however, especially over the last ten to fifteen years, adverse publicity – in books and cinema-films about Ireland in days gone by – has been weakening the Church’s reputation. Then, quite recently, the ‘paedophile’ scandals hit the headlines, and criticism of the Church reached fever-pitch. The influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland has taken a very dramatic down-turn, and seems at its lowest ebb ever. Events in Ireland have, of course, led to investigations of the Catholic Church’s record, in this matter, in other European countries – with further negative effects there.

All in all, the information available to us about *denominational* life in both Britain and Europe seems to suggest that things are not going well – for either the Catholics or the Protestants. In the limited confines of this little book, I have only quoted from a

few sources, but these are drawn from a large selection of similar reports. There are undoubtedly some exceptional situations, but, generally speaking, it would be fair to say that the downward spiral of the main-line denominations has, in recent years, been quite dramatic. In the part of the world which, for many centuries, was considered to be the ‘heartland’ of Christendom, the long-established regiments of the King’s Army seem to be in serious retreat! *So far as the older denominations in Britain and Europe are concerned, then, the opening sentences of what I was prophesying don’t seem to be all that wide of the mark!*

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What about those exceptions, however? Might it not be reasonable to hope that those local churches that are flourishing, within the main-line denominations, might be the starting-point for some kind of renewal of their denominations? Furthermore, are there not, in fact, plenty of ‘lively’ churches, and groupings of churches, *outside* the denominations – churches which, freed from long-established traditions, are more ‘on the wavelength’ of ordinary people? Quite a few of those newer churches are growing even now. Surely that is another reason for hope for the Church in general?

My problem with that kind of thinking is that I see a serious threat looming – especially for lively, active, and out-going churches! This threat need not concern ‘dying’ local churches, but churches that are very much ‘alive’ are going to be greatly affected! This mysterious “threat” will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: BRITAIN & EUROPE CONTINUED: THE THREAT TO 'LIVELY' CHURCHES

In the previous chapter, I talked about a sign-of-the-times which has been observable, one way or another, over the last fifty or sixty years – namely, the huge decline-in-support, in this part of the world, for the age-old denominations. By contrast, in this present chapter, I want to talk about two new signs-of-the-times that have only become prominent very recently – from about 2005 onwards. I believe it is important that every Christian be fully aware of these new inter-connected trends, and that every Christian also realises the effect that they are going to have, sooner or later, on the lifestyle and activities of 'lively' churches.

The first of these new signs-of-the-times is this: *a surprisingly loud outcry advocating the elimination of Christian influence from national life*. Down through the centuries, of course, there have always been occasional individuals who have challenged what they saw as the undue power that Christianity has exerted on public life. During the early years of this new 21st century, however, a great many influential people have started to urge their fellow-citizens to get rid of the Christian foundations that have undergirded most 'Western' nations.

Some of these people are authors (foremost of whom, in the English language, is Richard Dawkins, with his 2006 book "The God Delusion"); some are writers of articles in the press or in magazines; some are broadcasters; some are politicians; some are teachers in schools and universities; some are simply those who send 'letters to the editor' for publication in our daily newspapers. I am sure that the majority of my readers must have noticed that there is now, quite suddenly, an ever-increasing number of voices

raised – certainly in Britain and Europe – demanding that the influence of Christianity be completely removed from every part of society.

Let me take a few paragraphs to summarise the argument of those who take this particular line. (I'm putting their opinions in different print – to distinguish them from my own opinions.) THEIR ANTI-CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT RUNS ALONG THESE LINES:

For a great many centuries, the Christian Church has been impressing two strong 'principles for living' on the citizens of the countries where it has had influence. The first principle is: Believing in the Existence of God. Over the years, the Church has made a lot of people believe that there is a God 'up there', and that we shall all be in trouble, one way or another, unless we behave in the way 'He' wants us to behave. The second principle is: Using the Bible as the Central Guidebook for Life. Over the years, the Church has made a lot of people believe that the Bible is the place where we can find out what 'God' wants of us, and how we ought to be behaving.

In an educated society, however, we should no longer be listening to all this nonsense. We should no longer be permitting these ridiculous ideas to be circulated among us.

In the first place, there are no good reasons for believing that God exists, so it is crazy to 'look to Him' for guidance on how to conduct ourselves. In the second place, the Bible is nothing more

than a collection of myths and inaccurate historical accounts, full of irrational prejudices from the past. It follows, therefore, that the Bible should have no part in the shaping of society. It is full of claims and teachings that fly in the face of reason, and of scientific discovery.

It is, in fact, to Reason, and to Science, that we ought to be looking in this modern age. These particular 'guides for life' may not be perfect, or fully-developed as yet, but they are the only possible basis for human lifestyle. It is preposterous that we should be allowing people to have any influence in society, because they say "such and such is what God wants of us". This sort of approach must be silenced! Henceforward, in sensible society, we want to be governed by Reason, not 'Revelation', and by Science, not by a 'Supreme Being'.

Now, to those of us who have found God to be a proven reality in our personal experience, and the Bible to be an amazingly helpful source-of-guidance in our situations, these words must seem very sad. I, for one, have found my life made wholesome and positive by taking heed to the great recurring themes of Scripture. What's more, I have found my life permeated by so many remarkable 'coincidences', when I 'called on the Lord', that I cannot but see the loving hand of a Living God upon it. At the same time, I have observed these same things in countless other lives. Personally, I have reached the stage where I would find it impossible to suspend belief in my Lord and in His Word.

Nevertheless, I can see where these 21st-Century 'opponents of Christian influence' are coming from. Not for a moment do I accept their arguments, but I can understand *why* they put these

arguments forward. *They have not had the advantages that many of you, who are reading this book, have had.* They have not seen the hand of God in what has happened to them individually, or in what has happened to others. They have not encountered many examples of lives that have been truly lived in accordance with biblical guidelines, and which, consequently, have been positive, and creative, and useful.

Now, maybe their blindness to these realities is their own fault, because they choose to shut their eyes to evidence that comes their way. Alternatively, maybe it's our fault as Christians, because many of us have not really lived out the Christian life as we should. Perhaps, too, there are other factors that have prevented them seeing what we ourselves can see so clearly. Whatever the cause of their cynicism, however, from their own particular point-of-view and experience, what they are saying has a certain logic about it.

That leads me to another problem for the Christian cause. *The arguments of these 'opponents of Christian influence' come across as very logical to the General Public.* The average reader nowadays has not experienced much to make him, or her, disagree. Someone like Richard Dawkins is just putting into words what a lot of 'thinking people' actually think nowadays! (Not every 'thinking person' thinks that way, of course, but a great many of them do. Don't forget that "The God Delusion" was a runaway best-seller – certainly here in Britain.)

I realise, of course, that not everyone is a reader-of-books. Most people, however, have some sort of contact with expressions-of-opinion about matters affecting them. Many read newspapers; many listen to radio 'talk-shows', and watch discussions on television. Many people have quite serious chats, at work, and in pubs and other social venues. As a result, more and more members of the general public are hearing this opinion: "We should stop giving God, and the Bible, a say in how we live" – and the average person today, on hearing that, can't think of much to say in disagreement.

In the past, the 'gut feeling' among our populations was that God probably did exist, and the Bible probably was a reliable source of

instruction for life. As a result, for many centuries, the 'general public', in Britain and Europe, was willing to accept the powerful influence of Christianity in national affairs. Nowadays, however, the 'gut feeling' among our populations is that God probably *doesn't* exist, and the Bible is almost certainly *not* a reliable source of instruction for life. Consequently, the 'general public', in Britain and Europe, is now open to reject the influence of Christianity in national affairs.

I am not saying that all members of the 'general public', in this part of the world, are positively against Christian influence – but I *am* saying that, nowadays, only a small percentage of the population is positively for it. From now on, therefore, those who mount efforts to have Christian influence eliminated will, increasingly, get their own way. *Whenever attempts are made to reduce, or to remove, Christian influence in community life, there will not be any widespread outcry against what is happening!*

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That brings me to the second of the two new signs-of-the-times that I mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter. *Hostile words are already starting to lead to hostile deeds.* Actual attempts are now beginning to be made, in certain quarters, to limit Christian freedom-of-speech, and to put restrictions on Christian freedom-of-action. Let me give you some examples of this that I have come across recently. (The detailed information that I have available is all from the British scene, but the same trend is certainly observable on the Continent.)

My first example comes from Wales. The Welsh Assembly used to give a financial contribution to "Teen Challenge" – one of the world's largest Christian drug and alcohol ministries – because of their demonstrably good work among teenagers in that part of the UK. Recently, however, the Assembly decided to withdraw that public funding. The reason given was that Teen Challenge's rehabilitation programme "included spiritual elements". That's what I'm talking about! 'Spiritual elements' are now looked upon, by many people,

as being totally out-of-place in secular society.

Similarly, a church-run shelter-for-the-homeless, in Norfolk, was warned by a local-government official that its funding would be cut off, if it continued to make bibles available, or failed to remove “Spreading-the-Christian-Faith” from its official statement of objectives. There it is again: a recoiling from ‘biblical influence’, a paranoia about ‘spiritual elements’!

In one way, the loss of the cash was not a big issue to those particular Christian organisations. They recognised that God is well able to provide for His own work. Nevertheless, these incidents are indicative of a change in the outlook of many of those-in-authority throughout our land. Organisations where the expressing of Christian beliefs is somehow involved are beginning to be seriously frowned on – even if these organisations also have genuine ‘social welfare’ objectives.

Do not imagine that this attitude only applies when the granting of money is the issue. A few months ago, Mavis and I were at a wedding in Scotland. Most of the guests were believers, and, when we were having our meal, I expressed the opinion that Christian ‘outreach’ was increasingly under threat from governmental authorities, both local and central. Most of the others at our table thought I was greatly exaggerating, until a guest whom I didn’t know spoke up. He said that he was a prison chaplain. He explained that, over almost all the time that he had been in the prison service, chaplains had had total freedom to approach prisoners and engage them in conversation. “Recently however,” he said, “that privilege has been withdrawn. Now we are only allowed to speak to prisoners if they specifically request a conversation.” In so many places, nowadays, there is a growing suspicion of Christian freedom-of-speech, and Christian freedom-of-action!

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Some of you reading this book (perhaps many of you) will say

that a handful of isolated examples don’t prove much! *Well, keep your eyes open! I forecast that you will see many more incidents like these over the next few years.* I believe that such incidents are pointers to what lies ahead for those of us who live in the so-called ‘democratic’ societies of the West. *The gagging of ‘religious’ expression, and severe limitations on the activities of Christian groups, are on their way!*

I know that I am very far from being alone in this opinion. From time to time, I get correspondence from Christians who have heard speakers – from the Institutional-Church scene – talking in very similar terms to what I am saying in this chapter. I myself have in my possession some tapes of a series of talks, given to the British branch of “Christ for the Nations International” (CFNI), by the well-known and well-respected David Pawson. In these tapes, he warns that, before very long, the churches will lose their freedoms, and will not be able to operate in the ways they have previously used. (I am not at all claiming that he would support my prophecy, but he definitely thinks that the freedom-of-speech and freedom-of-action we have had are coming to an end.)

People in any kind of authority, in democratic societies, have to reflect the views of the majority, so a crack-down is inevitably coming (indeed, has already begun) on Christian projects in the community, whether they are ‘evangelistic’ projects, or ‘social welfare’ projects. The majority of citizens nowadays have no faith in what we might call ‘Sacred Revelation’, but – consciously or unconsciously – want to be guided exclusively by ‘Scientific Rationalism’. As a result, ever-increasing efforts are going to be made to cut biblical influence out of our public life.

It is, of course, the ‘lively’ churches that will be affected by this growing onslaught on Christian action. If a church cares about ‘Outreach in the Community’ (however you define that), sooner or later it will be in danger. Activity which could be considered specifically ‘evangelistic’ will be clamped down upon, and eventually banned (“offensive to other religions”; “an intrusion into the lives of logically-minded people”; and so on). Even activity that is not specifically ‘evangelistic’, however, will also be suspect, unless those

involved cut out everything that might be considered a “spiritual element” – thereby losing their Christian distinctiveness altogether!

I stand by what I said at the beginning of this chapter: *The 21st-Century signs-of-the-times point to the fact that (so far as Britain and Europe are concerned anyway) a stranglehold will – increasingly – be put on ‘outreaching’ Christian churches, and on ‘outreaching’ Christian organisations. More and more, they are going to be gagged and chained!*

I suggest to you that, from one point of view, it hardly needs a prophecy to tell us that a policy of constantly increasing ‘gagging and chaining’ will, sooner or later, drive the Church ‘underground’. Genuine believers will never be prepared to give up witnessing for Christ, or serving others in His name. Consequently, the following seems to me quite a logical and obvious conclusion to draw from the situation that is currently developing: *In 21st-Century Europe, as in 20th-Century China, the official Church will, in all likelihood, be replaced by an unofficial “Underground Church”.*

When, in the late 1990s, the ‘prophecy’ that appeared in Chapter Three of this book first impressed itself on my mind, I accepted it personally (for reasons that I will explain later) but I was somewhat lacking in confidence about proclaiming it to fellow believers. I knew that many of the older denominations were in decline, but I also knew of plenty of lively churches, both within and outside the older denominations. I realised that people would point to them and say: “There is no need for your ‘Replacement Army’. There are plenty of detachments of the existing ‘Army of Christ’ that are still ‘fighting well’.” Since the beginning of the new millennium, however, and especially since 2005, I have witnessed the rapid rise of militant secularism all over Europe, and its powerful influence on public affairs. As a result, I now have a burning conviction that, in this part of the world, at any rate, the ‘Remarkable Replacement Army’ is on its way. Fellow Christians in Britain and Europe! We need to prepare to ‘go underground’! I trust that this little book will make some contribution to that preparation.

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Over the last two chapters, of course, I have been concentrating entirely on Britain and Europe. What about the rest of the world, however? Is it not true that there are other places where there is still flourishing denominational life? Is it not true that there are nations in which the authorities still have to consider the opinions of the Churches?

Yes, indeed! The U.S.A. is a prime example. In that particular nation, church-going remains very much in vogue, and politicians still have to give serious thought to how Christians will react to their policies. The same can possibly be said, to a lesser extent, of a number of other nations.

In the next chapter, therefore, I want to look more closely at the situation in America – with some reference, also, to how things stand for the Christian Church elsewhere across the globe.

CHAPTER 7: WHAT ABOUT THE 'SIGNS OF THE TIMES' IN THE U.S.A. (AND ELSEWHERE)?

I would like to start this new chapter by referring, once again, to my Second-World-War “prologue” story from Norway. When Hitler first launched his attack on Norway, the area that might be called the ‘heartland’ of the country was, to everyone’s surprise, subdued fairly quickly. (That was the area round Oslo, where much of the nation’s political and commercial activity had initially developed.)

There were, however, other areas of Norway that constituted more of a challenge to the advancing Nazi forces. Outstanding, among those areas, was the region round the port of Narvik, in the North-West. In that particular district, detachments of the Norwegian Army were still in remarkably good shape, and popular backing for King Haakon was strong. As a result, the advances of the enemy were fended-off – so much so that, at one point, the hopes of the Allies were pinned on successful counter-attacks being launched from Narvik.

These events seem to me to be something of a picture of the present-day place of the Christian Church in the modern World. In Britain and Europe – the original ‘heartland’ of Christianity – apathy and secularism now seem to be in control. *There are, however, various other areas of the World where the ‘Army of the Lord’ is still presenting much more of a challenge. Outstanding among those areas is, almost certainly, the United States.* In that particular country, churches are still in remarkably good shape, and popular backing for Christ is strong. America seems a veritable ‘Narvik’ – holding out well against the onslaught that has well-nigh overcome Britain and Europe. Many Christians, both in the U.S. and elsewhere, would hope that the Church in America might be

used to spearhead a successful ‘counter-attack for Christ’ to other parts of the World.

Sadly, in the story of 1940s Norway, the much-hoped-for counter attack from Narvik never materialised. In fact, it was only a matter of time before, district by district, the Nazis occupied the rest of the country. In due course, the Nazi regime was in control everywhere. *Eventually, the Royal Norwegian Army suffered defeat on all fronts – even in sturdy Narvik. I suggest to you that, as the 21st Century unfolds, the Institutional Church everywhere (even in America) is going to go the same way.*

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Had military strategists, in 1940, looked more closely at the situation in Narvik, they might have seen signs of impending disaster – because the signs were there! Similarly, if Christians looked more closely, nowadays, at the situation in America, they would see signs of impending disaster there too. The actual details of what was going on in 20th-Century Norway needn’t concern us, but what has been happening, recently, to the Institutional Church in the United States, should get our attention. There are ‘signs of the times’, there, that deserve our consideration.

In the first place, the long-established denominations of the Church in the U.S.A. are already displaying similar weaknesses to those that have been prevalent in Britain and Europe. Several of the major Protestant denominations, for instance, are bitterly divided among themselves. They are embroiled in theological controversies of one kind or another – controversies that look like splitting them in half. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. is having to cope with exactly the same kind of scandals as those that have weakened the Catholic Church in Ireland. Protestants and Catholics alike should be seeing the danger-signals in these trends.

Secondly – and even more seriously – is the diminishing influence

of the Church on American life in general. Up until the end of the Second World War, most Americans accepted that both public and private life should be strongly influenced by biblical principles. Sixty years later, however, that is no longer the case. Whereas respect for Christian values once pervaded almost all of American society, nowadays there is a sizeable proportion of the population – in some areas, as much as half – that is paying little or no attention to the Church. A surprising amount of what comes over from America, to those of us who live elsewhere, through TV screens, film screens, and in other ways, shows very little evidence of Christian values!

(Mind you, the cause of the Church has not been helped by the attitudes and actions of some individual preachers, and some individual churches. Their extreme pronouncements and demonstrations have been well highlighted in the media, but do not represent the viewpoint of most sincere Christians.)

Thirdly – and most dangerous of all – ‘Militant Secularism’ is now intensifying its attack on the Church in America. In the previous chapter, I spoke about the voices that have recently been raised in Britain and Europe – voices advocating the total removal of Christian influence from society. Well, such voices are also being raised in the U.S.A. In fact, they are being raised even more loudly on the other side of the Atlantic than they are on the side where I live! Richard Dawkins’ “The God Delusion” has been a best-seller there too, but there is another Englishman who seems to be the leading light for the ‘anti-religion’ movement in the States. He is Christopher Hitchens, a high-profile journalist who lives and works in America. His book, entitled “*God is Not Great – Why Religion Poisons Everything*” was published in 2007. (The title should be enough to tell you the kind of opinions that are in the book, and are circulating widely in the U.S.A.)

I believe it is worth mentioning, for those who might be interested, a surprising incident that took place back in the autumn of 2004, in American academic circles. It centred round a certain Dr. Richard Sternberg, a very well qualified researcher at the famous Smithsonian Institution in Washington. As a side interest, he had an unpaid job as editor of a low-profile scientific journal. In his role

as editor, he had decided to accept-for-publication an article that made a case for “Intelligent Design” – the view that creation shows some scientifically-valid evidence of having been designed by a ‘pre-existing intelligence’. Now, this was not traditional ‘Creationist’ writing. The article didn’t argue for any measure of acceptance for Genesis chapters 1 and 2. It merely suggested that there were points at which Darwin, and those who followed him, had not satisfactorily explained absolutely everything. Nevertheless, many of Sternberg’s fellow-scientists at the Smithsonian seemed to go *berserk* over such a suggestion! Even though he was not, personally, the writer of the article, there was a *huge* outcry among his colleagues, and *many* calls for his dismissal. The issue had a big airing in the press, and one journalist described Dr. Sternberg’s career as “now in tatters”.

Though I am only quoting that single example of an attack on freedom-of-speech in American academic circles, a principle being increasingly advocated among academics is this: “Let thinking in the United States be governed by Scientific Rationalism alone. There is no place, whatever, for anything that smacks of ‘Sacred Revelation’.”

The academic world is not, of course, the only influential section of society. Politicians in the U.S.A. still pay a lot of attention to the views of the fairly large sector of the population that is Christian. At the same time, many well-organised pressure groups are lobbying, with increasing success, for the removal of any specifically Christian influence on political decisions, both at state and at national level. Make no mistake about it: Militant Secularism is mounting an ever-growing campaign.

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All in all, I believe that there are powerful indications that what has already happened, in the original ‘Christian Heartland’, has *started* to happen in America also. Firstly, there are serious splits among the long-established denominations. Secondly, the pendulum of public support for Christian values has already swung

at least half-way in the opposite direction. Thirdly, the voice of Militant Secularism is sounding-out – louder than ever.

Christians in the USA should not be complacent. They would be foolish to ignore the warning signals that are already flashing, or to imagine that what has happened in Europe (a previous bastion of the Christian Faith) could not happen in America. The U.S.A. could well be another Narvik – withstanding the enemy attack for longer than anywhere else, but succumbing in the end.

I can’t help remembering the circumstances of Belshazzar’s Feast, as described in Daniel, chapter 5. Even though the people in that situation were surrounded by many impressive signs of success, there was, in fact, “writing on the wall” – warnings, for those who could interpret them, that all was not well. As I see it, that is the current situation in America. At the moment, much of church-life in America seems strong, healthy and successful, and the denominations there are not yet in serious decline. However, there is ominous writing-on-the-wall, for those alert enough to see it.

The same thing applies to *any* nation where the ‘Institutional Church’ is still reasonably vibrant. Some readers of this book may live in countries where the churches, though possibly not so well-attended as in the U.S.A., are considerably better-attended than in the U.K. or in Europe. I put it to you, however, that the same principle applies. With you, there may not yet be *calamitous* signs-of-the-times, such as we have over here – but there is certainly “writing on the wall”. Look around you!

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Is all this becoming depressingly gloomy? Not content with pointing out the decline of the long-standing denominations in the “Old World”, and the growing threats, there, to the churches that are still vibrant, I am now claiming that, sooner or later, the same decline and threats will overtake the “New World”. Am I simply

turning into a very negative “prophet of doom”?

Not at all! In the previous chapter I already hinted that even simple logic would tell us that real disciples of Christ will not be silenced or ‘de-activated’. If necessary, they will “go underground”, as, for instance, Christians in China did during the 20th-Century (with great effect!) The second part of my prophecy is very much in line with words of Jesus about the Church: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. (Matthew 16:18. A.V.) What the second part of my prophecy says is that the Christian Church will continue to operate – and will operate effectively – but it will be in a different *form* from the one to which we have become accustomed.

When I ‘weighed’ that second part of the prophecy, according to criteria suggested in the New Testament, I continued to find encouraging support. Before many more pages have been written in this book, I shall start telling you about that support.

In the meantime, however, I want to take a couple of chapters to lay before you one final “Sign of the Times” that further confirms the earlier part of the chain-of-events that I have been prophesying. This final sign-of-the-times is not yet hitting the headlines; but, because of some rather unusual circumstances, it has come to my notice. Let me tell you about this particular development, and how I came to know about it...

CHAPTER 8: THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN “SOLDIERS-IN-WAITING”!

Once again, may I ask you to cast your minds back to the first part of the 1940’s story, which I recounted as an introduction to this book. You will remember that I explained how the King of Norway was considerably helped – in his efforts to re-vitalise and ‘re-vamp’ the opposition to Hitler – by the fact that, scattered throughout the country, there were a great many “soldiers-in-waiting”.

These particular soldiers, you will recall, were in a different category altogether from ‘deserters’. Deserters usually slip away from their units because, for one reason or another, it is no longer serving *their own best interests* to remain. By contrast, the individuals I was talking about had left their units because they had become convinced that it was no longer properly serving *their King’s cause* if they stayed where they were. It had become clear to them that the existing military set-up had no real future in the struggle against the forces that occupied their land. Nevertheless, they wanted to go on serving the King as effectively as possible. With that positive attitude, they ‘disappeared’ – back into what seemed like ordinary civilian life. Once there, however, they continued to keep a constant look-out for opportunities to be of use to their royal Commander-in-Chief. At the same time they were gripped by the conviction that the King would, before very long, replace the rapidly disintegrating army with a more appropriate opposition to the Enemy – and they wanted to be ready for that.

Something very similar has been happening, on the Christian scene, over at least the last twenty years! Alongside those who are leaving the Institutional Church because it no longer serves their purposes (and because, I suspect, many of them never had a personal commitment to the King-of-Kings) there is another, very different, brand of ‘church-leaver’. Deeply-committed followers-of-

Christ have been leaving too!

This giving-up of church membership by serious-minded Christians is not because such people have lost their enthusiasm for Jesus. Not at all! What they have lost is the assurance that the best way to serve Him is through the programmes and practices of an organised church. That is why they have moved away from their local fellowships – and from their denominations and groupings – and gone ‘outside the camp’ into the unknown. Once there, they seem to find fresh openings for serving their Lord and King; but, at the same time, they have this strong expectation that, before long, He will replace the former expressions of church-life with something more appropriate. *Scattered throughout the world, there are now men and women who could accurately be described as “Christian soldiers-in-waiting”.*

In my home here, I have a file of ‘evidence’ to prove that this is so. Not only does this file demonstrate that such people exist, but it demonstrates, also, that they exist in surprisingly large numbers – and that these numbers are increasing all the time. Let me tell you about this file, and how I came to acquire it.

* * * * *

Up until about fifteen years ago, my wife and I were staunch church-members, always fully involved in the activities of a local fellowship, wherever we happened to be living. We had even spent nearly two decades in “full-time service”, when I was a ‘pastor’ (or ‘minister’). Slowly but surely, however, we had come to this conclusion-about-church-life which I have been describing – this conviction that the existing church system was no longer the way forward for our discipleship. It became clear to us that, in spite of the past, we could not continue to be “church-goers”.

We knew that our action would cause raised eyebrows – to say the least – among our relatives and close friends. Because of our previous extremely-church-orientated lifestyle, the fact that we had

stopped “going to church” would seem, to those who knew us, very odd indeed – if not downright heretical!

The result was that, after a few years, I began to write an informal explanation for the step we had taken. I tried to put down, on paper, the biblical principles that had led us to this seemingly dramatic gesture. I typed out our reasons and conclusions, in an A4 format, and duplicated copies for those I thought might be interested. However, some of the folks who read what I had written felt that it should be made available to a wider audience. Consequently, our ‘defence’ for quitting the traditional church structures was actually published, in booklet form, under the title “Custom and Command”. (It’s the little volume I mentioned in the opening chapter.)

Ever since it made its appearance, I have been receiving letters (and e-mails) from Christian people who have read “Custom and Command”, and empathised with its contents. I have kept all this correspondence, in a file, here in my home – not for any sentimental reason, but because it provides my wife and myself with a great deal of information about the believers whom I have called “soldiers-in-waiting”.

I wish you could read these letters for yourselves – but that, of course, is not a possibility. As a “second best”, therefore, let me take the next chapter to briefly summarise their contents. Having introduced you to the idea that Christian “soldiers-in-waiting” actually exist, I believe it is important to share with you something of what I know about these unusual followers of the Lord.

We were reminded earlier that Jesus very much wants His followers to look at the signs-of-the-times, and to learn from them. As I see it, the emergence of “Christian Soldiers-in-Waiting” is yet another “sign of the times”. Whatever your initial reaction to such a phenomenon, Chapter 9 will be an opportunity to look, in a little more detail, at these particular believers – and to draw your own conclusions.

CHAPTER 9: SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE “CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS- IN-WAITING”

The first thing Mavis and I learned (as soon as we saw the postage stamps or the e-mail addresses on the correspondence we were receiving) was that there are Christian “soldiers-in-waiting” *in every corner of the globe*. It is true that half the correspondence we have received has come from the UK, but the other half has shown us that this development is world-wide.

We have learned, also, that the men and women involved are certainly not ‘backsliders’. Backsliders are Christians who once followed Christ very closely, but have now, for one reason or another, fallen away from their relationship with Him. Sadly, such people do exist. The folks I am referring to, however, cannot be described in that way. Their letters to us demonstrate that, without question, *Jesus is still the central focus of their lives*. Serving others in Christ’s name, and maintaining strong links with fellow-believers, are high priorities in their lifestyle. They are not *lapsed* Christians; they are *active* Christians – even though they are operating outside the commonly-accepted channels of service. They may be “side-steppers”, but they are *not* backsliders!

Then again, I must mention the *numbers* involved. I have many hundreds of letters and e-mails here – first-hand evidence which, even on its own, is sufficient to convince me that “soldiers-in-waiting” are now a significant feature of the Christian landscape. Those who write to us, however, do not always limit themselves to telling me their own story. Many of them refer, also, to other Christians (sometimes from their own locality, sometimes not) who have reached the same conclusions as themselves. One way or another, therefore – from direct evidence and from indirect evidence

– I can say with confidence that there are now *thousands* of such people following the Lord outside the existing churches. What’s more, the numbers are growing all the time. A dozen years on, we are still getting letters from men and women who have recently made this revolutionary change in their Christian lifestyle.

There is some value, I think, in pointing out that these “church-leavers” have come just as much from the *newer* churches as from the long-established ones. It would not be true to say that the “soldiers in waiting” were all products of the denominational system. There is definitely also a draining-away of some of the most enthusiastic and mature Christians from the newer-fellowships scene. It’s worth noting that, even where things are flourishing, some believers have still become convinced that the future lies elsewhere.

Finally, we have noticed that, in this drift away from the “normal” churches, by believers who are otherwise highly-committed, there don’t seem to have been any of the usual influences which set the trends among Christians. None of the folks who wrote to us mentioned a particularly persuasive preacher or writer, or even one of those powerful “movements” which sweep parts of the Church from time to time. Everyone we heard from seemed to have left their churches because of a growing *individual* conviction. This was based on their understanding of Scripture; on discussions with a few close friends; and on what they firmly believed were the leadings of the Holy Spirit in their own circumstances. With regard to that earlier book I wrote, for instance, no-one said it was ‘revelation’ to them – fresh teaching which pointed them in a new direction. They said, rather, that it was ‘confirmation’ – the underlining of a decision they had already made for themselves. *All over the world deeply-committed believers are, quite independently, cutting loose from the Church-System.*

If you are a “Christian Soldier-in-Waiting” you should know that you are not on your own! You are not an oddity! You have *many* brothers and sisters scattered throughout the world. Personally, I believe the time will come (if it hasn’t happened already) when the Holy Spirit will link you with others of like mind – as happened with

the soldiers-in-waiting in my introductory story. What’s more, I believe that the King of Kings has purposeful plans for you in the days ahead. I even dare to think that Part Three of this book might make some contribution to your being aware of what these plans might be.

If, on the other hand, you are a “Soldier of the Regiments” (a Christian who is seeking to fight the good fight within the existing church-system), I trust you will not be dismissive of the “Soldiers in Waiting”. You are going to meet such believers more and more as the days pass. Even if you cannot agree with the stance they take, I think you will find that most of them are as fully committed to the Lord Jesus as you are yourself. If the present trend continues (and I see no sign of its diminishing) such people will increasingly be a feature of Christian life. I suggest that there would be some value in understanding their point-of-view, even if you cannot agree with them. If you are prepared to read further in this book, you will – among other things – come to realise just how extensively they are already serving the King of Kings, even though they are no longer part of any of the “regiments” which have represented Him over the centuries.

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That is all I want to say about the “Signs of the Times”. As I have considered what has been going on in the Christian scene over the last few years, I have observed three new developments: 1) A dramatic decline in the long-established denominations – a decline which has gone far in the ‘Old World’, but is certainly not absent from the New World. 2) A rising ‘campaign’ by the forces of Secularism and Scientific Rationalism which, determined to obliterate all trace of Christian influence in public and private life, are “upping the ante” – so much so that lively churches everywhere are in danger of being gagged and chained. 3) An ever-growing body of ‘Christian soldiers-in-waiting’, world-wide, seeking to serve the Lord outside the traditional church-structures.

To my mind, there is an uncanny resemblance between the

opening scenes of what I have prophesied, and what has actually been happening recently – especially since we entered the new Millennium! However, let us now turn to biblical ways of weighing prophecy, *other than* “Signs of the Times”. I have to say that these ‘other ways of weighing’ have greatly strengthened my conviction that it is right to pass on to my fellow-Christians the second half of the prophecy as well as the first – to proclaim that a “Remarkable Replacement Army” is on its way!

SECTION TWO: OTHER BIBLICAL FACTORS IN WEIGHING A PROPHECY

CHAPTER 10: IS THE PROPHECY DELIVERED WITH A “SENSE OF REVELATION”?

In the passage in 1st Corinthians 14 that I mentioned back in Chapter 4 – the passage where Paul introduces the concept of ‘weighing’ prophecy – we find these six words: “*If a revelation comes to someone...*”(v.30). Paul obviously expected anyone who was going to make a prophecy to have some sort of “sense of revelation”. He seems to have assumed that givers of prophecies would have a definite conviction that God had specifically revealed what they were thinking of passing on to others.

He doesn’t say, of course, that the would-be ‘prophet’ has to explain what gave him, or her, that sense of revelation. He doesn’t insist that an account is given of the circumstances in which the prophecy was received. Throughout the Bible, however, many prophecies are accompanied by the story of how those who gave them became aware of what God wanted them to say. In the very next chapter, for example, I shall be reminding you of a famous Old Testament prophecy in Jeremiah 18. In that situation, Jeremiah tells of how his footsteps seemed to be divinely directed to the house of a Potter, and of how God spoke to him as he watched the Potter at work.

Let me give you another example – this time from the New Testament. In Acts 10:27-28, the Apostle Peter states categorically to a group of people that God had recently told him that He is only too willing to accept non-Jews into His Kingdom. Now, that

was a rather startling departure from traditional Jewish teaching! Consequently, in Acts 11:1-10, Peter has to defend this claim to his fellow-apostles. In doing so, Peter recounts a rather unusual incident in his personal experience. He tells the story of a dream he had had about a sheet with all kinds of animals in it, and explains how the voice of the Lord commented on the dream. In his discussions with his fellow-apostles, Peter was keen to show that he had a definite 'sense of revelation' about this particular 'word from the Lord'. (Incidentally, the story told in Acts 11 had already been told, in just as much detail, in Acts 10:9-16. It seems that Luke, who wrote 'Acts', goes out of his way to make sure that future Christians would know about Peter's 'sense of revelation'.)

I think it is necessary to tell you that I myself have a strong 'sense of revelation' about what I am saying in this book, concerning a 'Replacement Army for the King of Kings'. In this present chapter, I want to tell you how the prophecy came to me. It was triggered off by a rather unusual incident in *my* personal experience. I believe this is the right point in the book to tell you about it.

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One summer (some years ago now) as I prepared for our annual vacation, I went to our local library to find some casual holiday reading. One of the books I selected, on that occasion, was an intriguing-looking escape story, set in Norway during the Second World War. The book was entitled "We Die Alone" – which is actually rather strange, as the man-on-the-run *didn't* die! Against all odds, and after many extremely tricky situations, he finally made it across the border into neutral Sweden, and on to freedom. I really enjoyed that particular book, at that particular time.

In fact, I enjoyed it so much that, when we returned from our holiday, I went back to the library and borrowed two more war-time tales from Norway. Personally, I found all three books to be veritable 'thrillers'. However, it wasn't the exciting happenings in the lives of the authors that fascinated me most. What grabbed my attention, above all, were the activities of a network of ordinary

Norwegian citizens – a network which kept popping up in every one of these stories. I am talking, of course, about the Norwegian Resistance. I quickly realised that the real heroes of the books I was reading were not the writers who were recounting their personal adventures. The real heroes were the 'Resisters' – the people who backed them up; the people whose support made the adventures possible. My heart warmed to these down-to-earth, but dedicated, folks.

As I completed the third book, with a satisfying sense of having "enjoyed a good yarn", something very unusual took place! I got the strongest possible impression that *God* was speaking to me. This is what He seemed to be saying: "*Mark these people well. They are a parable of what I want you to be like in the days ahead. They are a parable of what I want all my people to be like, as they move on into the future.*"

(May I request that you don't interrupt at this point, and say to me: "What if you only *imagined* that you heard those words?" Later on in this chapter, I shall deal with that question. For the present, however, I simply want to explain how getting to know the story of the Norwegian Resisters led to my awareness of the 'Replacement Army Prophecy'.)

Because I was so convinced that my attention had, somehow, been drawn to the Norwegian Resisters by none other than my Heavenly Father, I determined to get to know as much as I could about them. In various ways, therefore, I familiarised myself with the whole panorama of events in Norway between 1940 and 1945. Then, once I knew the "parable" in reasonable detail, I began to ask myself what lessons, for the future, I should be learning from it.

Naturally, I started at the very beginning of the chain-of-events – with the opening instalments of the story. These opening instalments were really rather sad. I read how, in spite of the fact that many of their detachments put up a sturdy defence, the regiments of the King of Norway's original Army began to disintegrate, one by one, in the face of the massive Nazi onslaught. Then I saw that, faced with this situation, King Haakon VII had not attempted to reform his

existing Army, but had, instead, mobilised a force-to-oppose-the-Enemy that was, in a number of ways, quite different from what had gone before. Even though many ex-army types were involved, the Resistance was something separate. I began to think of it as a 'Replacement Army'. Within Norway, it took over as the body that carried out the King's purposes. The change was initiated by the King himself, and it lasted right to the end of the struggle.

As a result of those early 'instalments' of the story, I began to consider the startling possibility that our King also – the Lord Jesus Christ – might, at this present time, be initiating some kind of Replacement-Army to carry on His purposes, from now until the end of the age. I began to suspect that the main lesson I was supposed to be learning from the 'parable' was as follows: *The original 'Army' of the King of Kings is going to disintegrate, but a 'Replacement Army', for Him, is going to come into being.* One day, as I was mulling over these thoughts, the words I have written in italics in Chapter 3 – the words of the prophecy – came tumbling into my mind, and I wrote them all down. The prophecy flowed from my having a 'sense of revelation'.

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It has to be said, of course, that just because a person has a 'sense of revelation', doesn't mean, for sure, that God has spoken. Many prophecies, that later proved to be false, have been made by people who seemed convinced that God had spoken to them. The way things actually turned out, however, showed that their so-called 'prophecies' were the product of their own imaginations! That is why, right from the start, Paul insisted that, even when there is a strong 'sense of revelation' around, prophecies must be 'weighed'.

It seems that Peter, when addressing his fellow-apostles in Acts 11, instinctively knew that his 'sense of revelation' had, somehow, to be followed up. Having told the story of how this teaching – about non-Jews being welcome into the Kingdom – had come to him, he went on to point out, in verses 15 to 17, that his 'word from

the Lord' *had already been supported by 'signs of the times'*: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them, as He had come on us at the beginning...So, if God gave them the same gift as He gave us...who was I to think that I could oppose God?" He clearly believed that what happened afterwards demonstrated that he had not been imagining things!

The same kind of discussion came up again in Acts 15, and, once again Peter had had to tell his story, complete with the 'signs of the times' evidence. (Verses 7-11.) On this occasion, however, the Apostle James chipped in – to call attention to some additional supportive evidence. He pointed out that the acceptance of non-Jews *was consistent with teaching that ran through their Scriptures* (even though most teachers-of-the-law didn't seem to have noticed this). "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this", James argued (Acts 15:15) and he goes on to quote, very aptly, from the prophet Amos in particular. James was showing that Peter's claim that God had spoken to him – indicating a new direction for His People – was backed up, not only by recent events, but also by the Scriptures.

I totally accept that, on it's own, a 'sense of revelation' is not enough to convince us that a prophecy is true. A prophecy has to be supported by 'signs of the times', by consistency with the Scriptures, and in other ways suggested in the New Testament. However, if a prophecy is, indeed, backed up in these ways, then a 'sense of revelation' is of great value. Let me try to explain why....

The whole point about a prophecy, in the Christian meaning of the word, is that God has spoken. A prophecy is not a prophecy unless God has, somehow or other, conveyed the words to one of His servants, who then passes it on to others. If God has not initiated the statement, it is a mere human prediction. It might turn out to be a highly accurate human prediction, but it is not a "prophecy" in the biblical sense. Outside the Christian Church, the two words – prophecy and prediction – seem to be used interchangeably, but inside the Church, *a prophecy is something that starts with God approaching an individual, with a message for others.*

That fact has led me to two conclusions. First of all, if a ‘prophecy-giver’ *does* choose to tell the story of how he got the prophecy that is being given, it very definitely *ought* to be along the lines of “Here is how God spoke to me”!

Secondly, if a prophecy-giver *doesn’t* explain how the prophecy came to his or her mind, we should be able to ask that person questions along the following lines: “What makes you think that it is *the Lord* who has given you these words?” “Is there anything you can tell us that would help us to believe that this is not just your own opinion, or wishful thinking on your part, or a stray idea that has somehow entered your thoughts, but an actual ‘Word from God?’”

I am not saying that we have to ask these questions about every single prophecy. If it is immediately obvious to us that a prophecy is supported by ‘signs of the times’, and by a fair number of references through Scripture, probably such questions don’t need to be asked. If, however, we are not sure about the prophecy, and are wondering whether it is worth doing some serious ‘weighing’, it would definitely help to know whether the prophecy-giver has any significant ‘sense of revelation’ or not.

Jeremiah, and Peter, and various other Old Testament and New Testament figures, all thought it important to share their ‘sense of revelation’ with their hearers – and their example has motivated me! That is why I have taken this chapter to tell you how I discovered the Norwegian Resisters, and how I became convinced that their story was a God-given parable for the future of the Christian Church.

I’ll say it once again: I admit that, by itself, the incident I have related in this chapter doesn’t prove anything. However, combined with the ‘signs of the times’ which I have already shown you, with a consistency-with-Scripture which I shall be talking about in the next chapter, and with a further biblical check-up that is the subject of Chapter 12, *I believe that my account of the circumstances in which God spoke to me – my ‘sense of revelation’ – makes a definite contribution to the weighing of this prophecy.*

CHAPTER 11: IS THE PROPHECY CONSISTENT WITH WHAT THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF GOD?

Is it not time you went to training?” asked a concerned father, as his 15-year-old son, who was showing much promise as an athlete, settled down in front of the television one Saturday morning. “There’s no training today! The Coach says we mustn’t over-do it, and, every now and then, we need a weekend off,” came the unexpected reply. The boy’s Dad was highly suspicious, and decided he would need to investigate further. He was personally acquainted with the Coach, and he was pretty sure that that was *not* the sort of statement he would ever make! On further investigation he found out that the poor lad was anxious to bump into a certain girl at the shopping-mall later that morning, and had decided to skip training for once, though he was normally quite keen. (The trials of adolescence!) *Among other lessons, the young man learned that when wise people hear a statement that purports to come from a particular person, they check that the statement is consistent with the character of that person!*

The Bible is full of hints that the wise believer will do the same – with statements that purport to come from God. If we hear teaching, or prophecy, which someone claims is “the Word of the Lord”, we should ask ourselves whether what we are hearing is consistent with the character of God, as we find it revealed in the Scriptures.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that the apostle James had done that, when Peter claimed that God had told him that He gladly welcomed Gentiles into the Kingdom. James cast his mind over the Old Testament Scriptures that he knew so well, and realised

that ‘the Prophets’ were well peppered with that very teaching.

The apostle Paul, writing to Titus, also stresses the importance of checking that words, spoken in God’s name, should be in keeping with His character: “For there are many...talkers and deceivers... They must be silenced because they are teaching things they ought not to teach... *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him.*” (Titus 1:10,11, and 16.) The ‘actions’ Paul is mainly complaining about, of course, are the false things they are saying, and he says that that is connected with their not knowing God properly.

In Matthew 22, verses 23-33, Jesus Himself makes the same point. He takes issue with a group of Jewish religious teachers known as the Sadducees. He tells them that they are confusing people by their false doctrines – and He also tells them *why* they have got things so wrong. “You are in error,” He says (in verse 29), “because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.” He was warning them that their teachings were faulty because they did not know the Scriptures properly, and consequently didn’t know what God was really like, or what He was capable of doing.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus specifically talks about the relationship between prophecy and the character of God. In the first place, He teaches that the Holy Spirit will be the one responsible for passing on prophetic messages to believers: “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth...*and he will tell you what is yet to come.*” (John 16:13.) However, Jesus intersperses that teaching with assurances that what the Spirit passes on will always be in line with the views of the Father and the Son: “He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what he hears....He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine, and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine, and make it known to you.” (John 16:13-15.)

I could go on about this, but I think you have got the message: *Anything we pass on to others – teaching or prophecy – with the claim that it is a “word from the Lord” must be consistent with what*

the Scriptures reveal about the character of God.

* * * * *

That leads me to ask these questions: “Would it be consistent with the character of God for Him to allow the institutions that have represented Him, for so many centuries, to disintegrate completely?” “Is He the kind of person who might start operating through something very different to what He has used before?” “Is the idea of a ‘Remarkable Replacement Army’ really in keeping with what we know of our Heavenly Father?” I believe that the answer to all these questions is actually “Yes”. Let me tell you how, gradually, I came to that conclusion.

My conviction on the subject started to develop some years ago, when I was reading a well-known passage in the Old Testament. You will find the passage in Jeremiah Chapter 18, verses 1 to 6. Jeremiah recounts an incident in which he had been personally involved...

“I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; *so the potter formed it into another pot*, shaping it as seemed best to him.” Having told this brief story, Jeremiah followed it up with a serious question from the Lord: “O House of Israel, can I not do with *you*, as this potter does?”

When reading this particular passage, believers really should ask themselves: “What is Jeremiah hinting at here? Indeed, what is Almighty God hinting at, through Jeremiah’s words? What is the significance of this warning, to the whole House of Israel, about “forming another pot”? Unfortunately, for most of my own life, I did not bother to get through to the full meaning of what Jeremiah was prophesying. I seemed content with an amazingly vague interpretation, along the lines of: “We are all clay in the hands of the Divine Potter”. On this occasion, however, I suddenly saw the real thrust of Jeremiah’s words – and also their relevance to our

present situation.

My thinking went like this: A pot is a container. Sometimes, it is true, a pot can be made ‘just for show’; but, normally speaking, it is made to contain something; to hold something; to keep something in place – something that would otherwise spill out and be lost. Now, if you have a commodity that you value, and its container develops a crack, you have to re-consider your use of the container. If the crack is a minor one, it can, perhaps, be patched up; but if it is a major crack, you might reach the point where you stop using that particular container, and replace it with another.

All at once I saw that, through Jeremiah, God was saying to His People, all those centuries ago, something like this: “I gave you a container for the life-of-faith to which I called you; a framework for your discipleship; a ‘religious system’ (if you want to use that term). But the container has become ‘marred’. A serious weakness has developed in the system – a major crack. Be warned therefore! I will need to dispense with the system. I will need to stop using this unsatisfactory ‘pot’. And yet, be encouraged! For I will form it into another pot – I will work it into another framework, shaping it as seems best to me.” Nowadays, I find it hard to see any other explanation of Jeremiah’s words than this: *Jeremiah was prophesying that the framework for God’s People, that existed at the time, would come to an end – and be replaced by another framework!*

I decided to investigate a little further, and it soon became clear to me that the Jews did not have long to wait before this actually happened. This was not one of those prophecies that is fulfilled in the very distant future. What Jeremiah foresaw began to come true almost immediately after he said it, and it had fully come to pass within less than a hundred years.

In 2nd Chronicles 36, verses 11 to 21 (among other places in the Old Testament) we read that, very soon after Jeremiah made this prophecy, his homeland was occupied, and many of its inhabitants were taken into captivity in Babylon. The temple was destroyed, and *the entire religious system collapsed*. After some time, however, something different took its place – as described in the books of

Ezra and Nehemiah. In stages, the captives were allowed to return to the Promised Land, and *a completely new framework for loving and serving God* was established!

I don’t propose to go into details about this. All I need to say is that Jeremiah frequently had cause to complain that the ‘Book of the Covenant’ (the written Word of God that existed at that time) had been dreadfully neglected for a very long time. The new ‘framework’, described in Ezra and Nehemiah, made the Book of the Covenant, and teachers to help understand it, available once again to all God’s People.

Sorry about the lack of detail – but my aim at this point is simply to show you why I found Jeremiah’s “Potter Prophecy”, and the events that followed it, to be very relevant to the ‘weighing’ of the prophecy which had taken shape in my own heart and mind. There I was, pondering whether the idea of a total collapse of our present-day religious system, and its replacement by something completely new, was too extreme and ridiculous to put before my fellow-Christians. Suddenly I discover that there was a previous occasion when just such a turn-of-events took place!

At a certain juncture in Old-Covenant History (i.e. the History of the Jews), because something was seriously unsatisfactory in the religious-system of the day, Almighty God allowed it to disintegrate completely, and then replaced it with another system – another ‘framework’ for love and service. I began to realise that, should a similar situation arise somewhere in the course of New-Covenant History (i.e. the History of the Christian Church) God might do the same again! *There is undoubtedly a precedent, in the experience of God’s People, for a “replacement of the framework”!*

Up to the present time, as Church History has unfolded, the Lord has never allowed the entire system to be laid aside. He has allowed new ‘regiments’ to be added to the ‘Army of the Lord’, when existing ‘regiments’ failed to recognise some important aspect of His Truth. If, however, as the years of the 21st Century unfold, our Heavenly Father were to allow the entire system to disintegrate completely, and were to introduce a ‘Replacement Army for the

King of Kings’ – as I have been predicting – *He would certainly not be acting out-of-character*. My encounter with Jeremiah 18, and the events that followed, has shown me that, in His wisdom, *He has done that kind of thing before!*

* * * * *

Some of you may be put off by the word “replacement”. You may know that there is a teaching around, in certain Christian circles, that is often called “Replacement Theology”, and you may, quite rightly, have been warned that that particular teaching is very misleading. Basically the teaching refers to the promises made to the Jews in the Old Testament. It claims that the Jews have been replaced, as the recipients of these promises, by us Christians, so that the things God said to the Jews in those far off days no longer apply to them. Now, I agree that this is inaccurate theology. You only need to look at the writings of the Apostle Paul, particularly to the Romans, to get an entirely different picture. (If you are interested, you could look up Romans 4:16, and 11:1,17-18 and 28-29.)

I think it would be very silly, however, if Christian people who have heard negative comments about “Replacement Theology” imagined that, just because God would not replace the Jews as recipients of promises He had made to them, He would never replace anything! *I agree that He is not into replacing people, to whom He has made specific promises, but I have become increasingly sure that He is prepared, in certain circumstances, to replace frameworks.*

In the Old Testament, we have already seen that, in the years between Jeremiah on the one hand, and Ezra and Nehemiah on the other, the Lord replaced the religious system through which the Jews operated – their framework for serving God. That same theme, however, appears several times in the New Testament.

I believe, for instance, that the comments Jesus makes about ‘new wineskins’ (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37) are along the

same lines. Like the ‘pot’ of Jeremiah’s prophecy, a wineskin is a container. Jesus Himself is teaching that, if need be, our Heavenly Father is prepared to change the wineskins – the containers, the pots, the frameworks. The book of Revelation reports that Jesus continued with that teaching when He was speaking prophetically to the church in Ephesus: “If you do not repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place.” (Rev. 2:5.) Once again, what is being discussed is a container – that which holds a light-bearing candle.

At various points throughout the Bible, we find an outstanding example of “framework-changing” on God’s part. We are told that, when Time comes to an end, and Eternity begins, the Lord is going to change the framework in which human beings have always operated. Even though He Himself created this Earth, and the firmament of Heaven, *He is not going to renovate His creation; He is going to replace it!* He is going to bring into being a “New Heaven and a New Earth”. This was first prophesied many centuries ago, in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. Peter refers to it: “In keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13.) Finally, John sees the divine replacement in a vision: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.” (Rev. 21:1)

As we find Him portrayed in the Bible, God is *not* someone who is always chopping and changing. James describes Him as “the Father of lights who does not change like shifting shadows”. (Jas. 1:17.) Nevertheless, we have not understood His character properly if we do not see that, when circumstances require it, He is prepared to put aside a former framework, and replace it with another. Don’t let the inadequacies of the so-called ‘Replacement theology’, or indeed any other theory you might have, blind you to the fact that, when necessary, the Divine Potter is prepared to take a ‘pot’ He has already made, and “form it into another pot, shaping it as seems best to him.”

In fact, if you think about it, we actually saw Him do that in 20th-Century China. He looked at the framework so patiently built

by successive missionaries. (Having read the life stories of quite a few of these missionaries, I know that there were many truly wonderful servants of the Lord among them.) Nevertheless, even though there was good work being done, He allowed the Church, as it was then constituted in China, to be swept away, and to be replaced by an 'Underground Church' – an Underground Church that was, in many ways, remarkably successful.

Dear Christians of the Western World! What makes you so sure that, having done this in China, our Heavenly Father could not do the same thing in Britain, or Europe, or in some of the other countries that were once considered 'Christian Countries', or even in the U.S.A., or, indeed, all over the World?

So far as I know, the Chinese Christians of the late 1930s got no specific warning that this was going to happen – no opportunity to prepare themselves for life 'underground'. By contrast, we Christians of the early 21st Century, *are* getting warnings from various directions. (I shall be talking further about that in the next chapter.) We *can* prepare ourselves for this next phase in the Christian story, if we are willing to do so. I am hoping that this book will make some contribution to that process.

Back, however, to the main point of this chapter: If God were to allow the 'Institutional Church' to be replaced by an 'Underground Church' He would certainly not be acting out of character.

CHAPTER 12: THE SUPPORT OF 'OTHER WITNESSES'

In Matthew 18:16, the Lord Jesus reminds His hearers of a long-standing Old Testament practice: "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses". The Apostle Paul goes on to quote the very same words in 2nd Corinthians 13:1. Running through the Bible there is this thread: *It is not enough to have a solitary witness to something. If, however, at least one other person is saying exactly the same thing, the claim of the first witness is worth listening to. (Two other people, to confirm what the original witness says, would be even better.)*

Thinking about this principle of 'two or three witnesses' made me realise that my 'weighing' of the prophecy would be strengthened if, somewhere 'out there' there was at least one other believer who had received pretty much the same 'vision' of the Church-of-the-Future as I had done. (If there was more than one person with similar revelation, that would be better still!)

One morning, out of the blue, just such a witness to my prophecy suddenly appeared – unsolicited – before me! Let me tell you about that...

* * * * *

I had better say, right away, that this 'witness' did not appear before me in the flesh – but in the pages of my daily newspaper! When I opened the paper on that particular morning, I was confronted by this headline: CHURCH FACES IMPLOSION, AND LIFE UNDERGROUND, SAYS SENIOR ADVISER.

The ensuing news-item explained the headline quite fully. It transpired that a lady called Jayne Ozanne, a member of the prestigious “Archbishops’ Council” of the Church of England had, that very week, delivered a paper to the Council, with what the religious correspondent of the newspaper described as “ an apocalyptic warning about the future of the Church”. Speaking of Ms Ozanne, the report continued: “She gave warning that...the outlook for the established Church was not good, and that the Church would continue to implode and self-destruct....She said that its future will be one of an underground movement comparable to resistance movements during the Second World War.”

That underlining there is mine, of course. I have emphasised those particular words because they are saying the same thing as I have been saying. Jayne Ozanne is using exactly the same metaphor as I used at the beginning of this book – the Resistance metaphor that I shall continue to develop in my remaining chapters. I have never heard anyone else use that metaphor. Someone may have done, of course, but I haven’t personally seen or heard it used by anyone else. When I read the words underlined in the paragraph above, I yelled out, and rushed to show the newspaper article to my wife!

The newspaper article summarises the conclusion of Ms Ozanne’s report to her fellow members of the Archbishops’ Council: “She predicts that a new ‘Church in England’ will take root, consisting of non-denominational cell groups throughout the country.”

I realise that newspapers are notorious for making reports that are inaccurate. They are notorious for putting a ‘spin’ on the facts, in order to turn them into a ‘scoop’, or, at least, a dramatic story. Even though the particular newspaper I was looking at has a reputation for being one of the most accurate in the country, I decided to do some checking. I am not a person who is much given to ‘surfing the Net’, but I typed Jayne Ozanne’s name into the search engine on my computer. As it turned out, she has her own web-site, and the paper she had read to the Archbishops’ Council was there in full. The newspaper had, indeed, captured the essence of what she was prophesying.

One other fact I learned from the newspaper article. Jayne Ozanne is not some strange person from the ‘lunatic fringe’ of the Church! She is a talented and well-respected woman in her mid-thirties - someone who has been highly successful in the secular jobs she has had, and who had been asked personally, by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, to serve on their Council (which oversees the policy and direction of the Church of England). She was expressing these radical opinions after years of sincere involvement in the Institutional Church.

Now, I have not made any attempt to contact Ms. Ozanne. Her opinions are in the public domain, so I feel it is fair enough to quote them. Though she obviously sees the Church developing in roughly the same way as I do, she may not agree with any of the other details mentioned in this book. The only point I really want to make is this: When I came across Jayne Ozanne’s pronouncements, I was greatly boosted in my determination to bring my prophecy to the attention of any fellow-Christian who would listen to it. *From then on, I felt that, if I made public the predictions that were on my heart, I would not be a ‘lone voice, crying in the wilderness’. At least one other ‘witness’ was saying much the same thing as I was saying!*

* * * * *

Some of you may feel that I am getting this boost to my confidence from the bare minimum of ‘witness support’ that the Bible recommends! You will point out that the verse I quoted mentioned ‘two or three witnesses’. “There’s yourself and Jayne Ozanne,” you will be tempted to say, “but surely there must be at least one other person? In fact, is the phrase ‘two or three’ not just a common expression for ‘several’? Is the meaning of the biblical sentence you quoted not more along the lines of: ‘A matter can only be established if *several* other independent ‘witnesses’, in addition to whoever first introduces the issue, testify to the same thing?’ We would be much more impressed if you were supported by what the book of Hebrews calls ‘a great cloud of witnesses!’”

The fact is: *I have reason to believe that a ‘great cloud of witnesses’*

is actually building up. I have reason to believe that quite a number of books are appearing, which – one way or another – are pointing in the same direction as this book of mine. These books may not use the ‘Resistance Movement’ metaphor that has focussed the minds of both Jayne Ozanne and myself, but, by and large, they are prophesying, or predicting, a very similar transformation in the Church of Jesus Christ, as the 21st Century develops.

I say “I have reason to believe...” because I haven’t actually read any of these books! I have only heard them mentioned, or, at most, seen the ‘blurbs’ on their front or back covers! I haven’t looked inside any of them! That may surprise you, but – if you think about it – it is the only honourable course of action I could take.

In a court case, *witnesses must be absolutely independent of one another.* They should not be people who know, in advance, the line the others are going to take. Each witness should report nothing more than what he or she, personally, has seen and heard. Only if witnesses have remained separate, right up until they are actually in the witness-box, is their testimony fully valid. Any getting-together to compare notes, would fly in the face of justice. In the course of a trial, however, if several quite independent witnesses say more-or-less the same thing, the jury can have a great deal of confidence in what is said.

From the very start, therefore, I determined not to go out of my way to examine anything anyone else was saying on the subject of the future of the Church. I don’t want to be influenced by other authors while I am writing my ‘testimony’ about what I believe has been revealed to me. I want to be a witness who can be trusted for his independent stance – as all witnesses should be. *After* I have completed this book, and have finally put it in the hands of the publishers, I shall enjoy reading as many of the books as I can. I suspect that I shall find in them a surprising amount of confirmation for what I am prophesying. Until then, however, I shall stick to recording just what has come to me through that mysterious interaction between the Word, the Spirit, and my own experiences and thoughts.

You – the reader – however, need not be limited in this way. If you think the subject of the future of the Church is important, you should get hold of whatever comment you can. I strongly suspect that, among what will no doubt be a kaleidoscope of opinions, you will find a surprising number of matching predictions. I strongly suspect that, sooner or later, you will come to the conclusion that what I have written in the first three chapters of this book is, indeed, ‘what the Spirit is saying to the churches’. You will come to that conclusion because the matter is established by coinciding testimony – not only from myself and one or two other witnesses, but from a whole cloud of believers who are, independently, saying more-or-less the same thing!

* * * * *

I am drawing near to the end of the second part of this book – the part I have entitled “A Contribution to the Weighing of the Prophecy”. Although I very much hope that I have given you some material that you can use in your own ‘weighing’, my main purpose, in writing Part Two, has been to show you why I became personally convinced that there was enough support for this prophecy to encourage me to make it public. Let me summarise, very briefly, the argument of the last eight chapters.....

Quite some time ago, I took on board the words of the Apostle Paul about ‘weighing’ prophecies. Then, I searched the Scriptures for clues about how a believer should go about this – and I found four criteria for judging prophecy, each mentioned in various places in the New Testament. When I ‘weighed’ my own particular prophecy against each of these criteria, I came to the conclusion that it conforms to all four of them.

In the first place, I have always had a ‘sense of revelation’ about the prophecy. I have never forgotten the incident in which I heard the Norwegian Resisters described as a ‘parable’ for my own future as a believer, and, indeed, for the future of the whole Church.

Secondly, I have been startled by the ‘signs of the times’ that I have observed in the years since the prophecy first came upon me. Month by month I still seem to hear, or read, of some new confirmation of the early stages of what I am prophesying.

Thirdly, I have become convinced, in the light of Scripture, that the replacement of the Institutional Church by an ‘Underground Church’ would not be out-of-character for our God. He is not someone who is constantly making changes, but He is someone who is prepared, on occasions through History, to ‘form a new pot, as seems best to Him’.

Finally, I have seen that I am not a ‘lone voice, crying in the wilderness’ about this issue. In fact, I have reason to believe that, before very long, more and more believers will be pointing the rest of us in the same direction.

All in all, I have thoroughly weighed the prophecy in the balance, and I have not found it ‘wanting’. So I feel very strongly that I would have failed badly, in my duty as a follower of Christ, if I had not made every effort to pass it on to fellow-believers.

* * * * *

I am not so naïve, of course, as to imagine that absolutely everyone who has reached this point in the book is as convinced as I am! I am reasonably sure, in fact, that a number of you (how large or small a number I cannot say) will have decided that you do not intend to read any further. You do not think of yourselves as “Recruits in Christ’s Replacement Army”, and, consequently, you do not see much point in reading the “Challenges and Encouragements for Recruits”, that make up the rest of the book.

If you feel you have ‘had enough’, however, may I request that you read just a few more paragraphs, before you take your leave of me? It’s not that I am looking for a last chance to persuade you. It is, rather, a question of a few loose ends that, I believe, ought to be

tied-up before some of us go our separate ways. I believe that we could part in a way that would be honourable for Christians, if each of you would read the introduction to Chapter 13, and whichever subsequent section of the chapter is relevant to yourselves.

(Incidentally, those of you who positively *want* to read Part Three can actually ‘skip’ chapter 13, and go immediately to the beginning of Chapter 14.)

SECTION III: ROUNDING-OFF THE WEIGHING
PROCESS

CHAPTER 13:
SOME COMMENTS FOR THOSE
WHO ARE THINKING OF
READING NO FURTHER

INTRODUCTION

(For everyone intending to finish soon)

Those of you who are contemplating closing this book after this chapter probably fall into four distinct groups.

In the first place there will be *those of you who totally reject the prophecy*. Having read what I have called my ‘supportive material’, you are still adamant that you cannot accept what I have predicted. So far as you are concerned, the prophecy had not passed the test of being ‘weighed in the balance’, and is almost certainly a ‘false prophecy’. Naturally, I would completely agree that, if a prophecy is indeed false, there is no point in reading a ‘follow-up’ to it (certainly not a lengthy follow-up)! All I am asking you to do, however, is to read a small section of three or four more paragraphs that begins very shortly – a final farewell to yourselves.

Secondly, there will be *those of you who feel the need to become much more certain, one way or the other, before taking the matter further*. At the moment, you neither reject, nor accept, the prophecy. You want to examine what I have been saying more thoroughly, before considering how you would act upon it, if it were true. You see no value, at this stage, in reading Part Three, since it is clearly

intended for those who have already reached a point of acceptance – those who already see themselves as ‘recruits in the Replacement Army’. That is definitely not how you see yourself at the moment. In fact, you do not know, yet, if you will ever see yourself in that role! Well, I have some comments for you also – comments that might prove relevant to your present situation.

Thirdly, I am sure that there are *some of you who actually accept the ‘bare bones’ of the prophecy, but who have a strong reservation about at least one part of what I have been saying.* There is an aspect of my overall prediction that ‘sticks in your throat’, as you try to take it in. In one sense, you agree with what I am prophesying, but there is something that makes you uncomfortable in doing so. There is no way, therefore, that you could launch yourself, right now, into the ‘Replacement Army’ or, indeed, into ‘Encouragements and Challenges’ for its ‘recruits’. As you will no doubt expect, however, I have some brief comments, also, for those of you with reservations!

Finally, there are, very possibly, *those who accept the prophecy, but think it is expressed in terms that are too militaristic or too masculine!* Some people may have been put off immediately by the presence of the word ‘Army’ in the title, and the general ethos of War that is intertwined with the theme of the book. I can imagine some people saying: “We have had enough mention of war in our media over the last few years. We really don’t need anything more along these lines.” In a somewhat similar vein, some women might have the impression that the Resistance was mainly composed of men, and might imagine that what follows will be of little interest to them. I am going to start off these “Comments for People who are Thinking of Reading No Further” by addressing those of you who feel that what lies ahead may be over-militaristic, or over-masculine. After that, I shall address those who are more concerned about the accuracy of the prophecy than its background.

I hope it is obvious that no one needs to read the whole of the rest of this chapter. The comments intended for each of the four ‘groups’ are clearly marked. Unless you really want to know what I have to say to Christians who have had different reactions to

the prophecy from your own, it is perfectly reasonable to confine yourself to the comments under the heading that best describes yourself....

A BRIEF COMMENT FOR THOSE WHO SUSPECT THE
REST OF THE BOOK WILL BE TOO MILITARISTIC – OR TOO
ORIENTATED TOWARDS MEN

If you take an overall view of Resistance Movements across Europe, you will soon become aware that a) They were, basically, *civilian* movements; and b) There were as many women as men actually engaged in the work.

It is true that, during the early days of the War, the Resistance in most countries, including Norway, consisted of ex-soldiers who, in those days, and in the countries concerned, were always men. It was not long, however, before more and more civilians became involved, and, consequently, the numbers of males and females evened up. (Incidentally, as we go on, you will see that the age-range was very wide. You will meet both ‘senior citizens’, and young boys and girls, who were playing an essential part in the struggle!) All in all, there is plenty in the pages ahead to interest readers of every type and temperament and outlook.

A COUPLE OF COMMENTS FOR THOSE WHO REJECT THE
PROPHECY

In the first place, I have to confess to you ‘rejecters’ that I, too, have done my fair share of ‘rejecting’ in the course of my life. At various times, I have dismissed prophecy – and also teaching – that has been brought before me. Even though others were happily responding to what was being said, I was digging in my heels. I wasn’t rejecting just to be awkward; I was doing it because what was being prophesied, or taught, didn’t square with everything else I knew at the time. Either it didn’t square with the great principles of Scripture, as I understood them, or else it didn’t square with other evidence that the Bible tells us to look out for.

So, my first comment to you ‘rejecters’ is this: if you are rejecting my prophecy for reasons like that, I can respect your decision. I am assuming, of course, that you have heeded Paul’s advice to believers (in 1st Corinthians 14:29) to give careful consideration to prophecies that are before them. However, if you have ‘weighed’, thoroughly and sincerely, and still rejected, you are only doing something that I myself have done quite a few times in the past. Under those circumstances, it is not a problem for me that – unless you continue to read out of interest in how other Christians might live – we have come to a parting of the ways.

Having said that, though, I must add that there have been occasions in my own experience when what I would call “fresh evidence” has made me change my mind. There have been times when Scriptures I hadn’t noticed before, or hadn’t properly understood before, led me to accept something I had hitherto rejected; or happenings of various kinds made me re-assess some long-held opinions. In those situations I am glad that I didn’t stick to my guns, just for the sake of saving face, or toeing some party line. Realising that it is, sometimes, downright dishonest for a Christian to continue with a long-held opinion, I constantly urge myself to remain open to the Word and to the Spirit.

Consequently, my other comment to you is simply this: *Never forget the possibility that further evidence concerning something you have rejected – further information, further understanding, further promptings – might come your way, and cause you to change your mind.* In everything concerning the walk of faith, let us all remain open, at all times, to the Word and to the Spirit.

FOR THOSE WANTING TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER, BEFORE READING ON

Firstly, let me say to those who want to examine the prophecy more thoroughly before they do anything else, that *I totally applaud the stance you are taking.* Writing to the Romans, the Apostle Paul once said: “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” (Rom. 14:5.) You are right not to act upon the prophecy if you are not yet fully persuaded about it.

At the same time, I strongly urge you: “*Don’t procrastinate about doing your ‘more thorough examination’.*” It would be all too easy to put this book away, and forget about it, among the many demands of your present church-activity. However, if there is even a slight possibility that God has said that He will be sending the Church ‘underground’ – even a slight possibility that He has given us a ‘parable’ to guide us for the future – we need to be checking it out, as soon as we can. It is a matter of some urgency that we make up our minds about this prophecy, one way or the other.

There are, I suggest, two practical ways you could accelerate the process of your ‘more thorough examination’. The first is to discuss the prophecy with Christian friends. Be careful, however, to choose those who will not approach the issue with minds already made up, but are prepared, rather, to discuss the matter in the scrupulously honest way a jury must use, before pronouncing a ‘Guilty’ or ‘Not Guilty’ verdict.

A second practical step you could take would be to make a conscious decision to keep your eyes open for what I described earlier (to those who feel they must reject the prophecy) as “further evidence”. Jesus has promised us that, if we seek, we shall find. So, if you are constantly on the alert for any material – in the Scriptures and elsewhere – that has a bearing on the prophecy I have been talking about, I am confident that, before very long, you will come to a firm conviction about it, one way or the other.

There is one other suggestion I would make to those of you who are going to ‘investigate further’. Keep this book safely somewhere! You may yet find it of value! My own opinion is that, in due course, every serious-minded follower-of-Christ will find himself, or herself, in the Underground Church – in the ‘Replacement Army’. I certainly don’t want anyone press-ganged into this ‘Army’ before they are ready, but I do believe that many of you will live to see the day when you, too, are willing ‘recruits’. When that day comes, I think you will find that the bible-teaching of Part Three is very relevant.

FOR THOSE WHO ACCEPT, BUT HAVE RESERVATIONS
ABOUT THE PROPHECY

I would like to consider, briefly, three of the most common reservations that fellow-Christians have expressed to me, when I have told them, orally, about this prophecy. (If you want to, you can glance at the headings (in italics), and confine yourself to reading the comments about the reservation that is most like your own.)

One very common reaction is this: *“This prophecy is far too negative! It is inconsistent with the positive spirit of the New Testament!”* People who speak in this way tend to remind me that Jesus promises that the ‘Gates of Hell’ will not prevail against the Church (Matt. 16:18. A.V.); and that Paul assures us that, in Christ, God always leads us in ‘triumphal procession’ (2 Cor. 2:14.) They say that my prophecy, showing the total disappearance of so much that many Christians hold dear, runs quite contrary to the New Testament theme of the Church prevailing against all odds.

The fact is, however, that in prophesying the disappearance of the institutional form of the Church, I am not prophesying the disappearance of the Church itself. Far from it! What I am prophesying is the re-appearance of the Church in a different form. I am prophesying a phoenix rising from the ashes. I am prophesying a powerful continuation of the People of God.

If you think that the prophecy is suspect, because it conveys an impression of “doom and gloom” that is inconsistent with the New Testament, may I suggest that you start reading Part Three immediately! Part Three will show you, *fairly fully*, what I mean by ‘the re-appearance of the Church in a totally different form’. It will paint you a *detailed* picture of ‘a powerful continuation of the People of God’. You will see, much more clearly, what I have in mind when I say ‘a phoenix rising from the ashes’. This book is about the failure of the “Gates of Hell” to prevail against the Church. Its theme is Christ leading us to eventual triumph. The remaining chapters contain genuinely good news for those who believe the way ahead will be something positive – *and* for those who are discouraged about the present situation.

Another possible reservation some of you might have about my prophecy is that, although you accept the main assertion which it contains – that the Church is going to have to ‘go underground’ – you are not-at-all sure about some of the subsidiary details that the prophecy gave.

That is very understandable. I didn’t want the weighing of the prophecy to be too complicated, so – in Part Two – I concentrated on the ‘backing’ necessary for its central theme. I reckoned that if readers were not convinced, first, about the coming-into-being of a Replacement Army, they wouldn’t be interested in the details of what such an ‘Army’ might be like. Part Three of this book, however, discusses the *nature* of the Replacement Army. It provides, for your consideration, what I believe to be confirmation for the details that I have, up till now, left un-confirmed. My suggestion, for those of you with the uncomfortable feeling that there are parts of the prophecy that have not been properly corroborated, is the same as the one I made to those who felt I was being too gloomy: Read on! I believe you will find, somewhere in Part Three, reasonably full explanations for the reservations you have.

Let me give you an example of the kind of ‘subsidiary detail’ that was in the prophecy, but has not, so far, been discussed. In the fifth paragraph of the prophecy, there these words appeared: “In this new set-up, there will be... no division between ‘clergy’ and ‘laity’... God will continue to use role-models...but the Holy Spirit will be the key figure in every locality.” I can well imagine some of you saying: “What’s that all about? It all sounds rather vague – and very open to abuse!”

I can assure you, however, that that whole issue is discussed very thoroughly in Part Three – as are all the other details, mentioned in the prophecy, about what lies ahead for the Church. If something ‘niggles’ you about what I have already said, I am fairly confident that you will find some coverage of the matter in the pages ahead.

A final reservation about the prophecy that some of you may have is that, although you fully acknowledge that there is a great deal of ‘writing on the wall’ concerning the Institutional Church, you yourself

are currently involved in a 'successful' local church. You see no point, therefore, in abandoning a 'going concern' for something that doesn't even seem to be 'up and running' yet! Furthermore, you dare to hope that there might yet be a turning of the tide – an up-swing in the 'fortunes' of the existing Church.

I accept that this is a perfectly reasonable response for someone in your position – provided you remain open to the possibility that things might not, in the long run, work out as you hope, and make at least *some* preparations, in case your hopes are not fulfilled.

Your situation can be likened to that of the soldiers who manned the battery on the Oslo Fjord in the spring of 1940. Although their equipment was quite old, they scored a direct hit on the leading enemy cruiser, and caused the flotilla that was sailing on the capital to turn back. Needless to say, these Norwegian artillerymen did *not* abandon their posts at that point. That was true, also, of various other units which had brought about setbacks for the advancing Nazi forces. However, most thinking people recognized that the over-all prospects were extremely grim, and plenty of soldiers (and especially officers) discussed the issue of “What do we do for the best, in our King’s cause, if even the most successful of our military detachments are finally overcome?” Such discussion was not defeatism, it was realism. There was no ‘head in the sand’ mentality.

I would respectfully suggest that those of you who are engaged in what you feel is ‘successful’ Christian Work should consider acting in the same way. If you see what you are currently involved in as being genuinely ‘fruitful’, I can understand that you will want to carry on. However, there ought not to be any ‘head-in-the-sand mentality’. In common with those Norwegian troops that were still being successful, you (especially those who are leaders among you) should be discussing what to do if even the most successful of our churches are finally gagged and chained. Furthermore, I personally believe that every conscientious leader ought, in these threatening times, to be giving church-members some teaching on living out the Christian life if we have to ‘go underground’. That would not be defeatism, it would be realism.

Brother and sister Christians – those of you who consider your future to be well *within* the Institutional Church – I urge you to read on! Part Three is about these very issues. It looks at the New Testament, and asks these very questions: “What do we do for the best, if even the most successful of our churches can no longer operate freely?” “How do we live enthusiastically for Christ?” My argument is that such discussion is not only relevant for those who have come to the point of seeing themselves as ‘Recruits in Christ’s Replacement Army’. Such discussion is relevant also for those who are firmly rooted in the Institutional Church. They ought to be considering these issues *now*. There is no guarantee, whatever, that the status quo will be maintained. In these threatening times, such discussion is important for *every* Christian.

CONCLUSION

(For everyone who cares to read it)

That concludes my remarks to those of you who, for one reason or another, do not see yourselves as ‘Recruits of the Replacement Army’. To those of you who are definitely leaving me at this point, I say: “May the Lord, whom we both seek to serve wholeheartedly, be with you on your onward journey!” To those who have decided to read on, in spite of reservations, my words are these: “May it become totally clear to you all – one way or another – what the King of Kings wants of you, as the future unfolds.”

PART THREE:
ENCOURAGEMENTS AND
CHALLENGES
FOR RECRUITS OF THE
REPLACEMENT-ARMY

**CHAPTER 14:
HOW I CAME TO HAVE THESE
“ENCOURAGEMENTS AND
CHALLENGES” TO PASS ON TO
‘FELLOW-RECRUITS’**

It is a very great joy to be able to address fellow-Christians who have acknowledged the truth of the prophecy that I introduced in Part One of this book. Although I realise that there may be some people who are making a noble effort to read Part Three even though they are not yet convinced about the validity of Part One, I am assuming that most of you who have embarked on reading the remaining chapters now see yourselves, in some sense at least, as ‘Recruits of the Replacement Army of the King of Kings’. I positively relish the task of passing on to you some challenges and encouragements that have come my way, and I hope that, as I do so, those who do not yet see themselves as recruits will also receive some blessing.

I feel quite strongly, however, that readers won’t be able to appreciate Part Three properly, unless they understand the process by which I got hold of the teaching it contains. I am going to take a few pages, therefore, to explain where, and how, I came across this material that I have called “Encouragements and Challenges for Recruits of the Replacement Army”.

The “*where*” of the matter is very straightforward. I got the material from the Bible – particularly from the New Testament. All the encouragements, and all the challenges, come from the Scriptures. The “*how*” of my becoming aware of these biblical

encouragements-and-challenges is a slightly more roundabout story, but I think you should get a brief outline of what happened....

* * * * *

In Chapter 10, there is a full account of how the ‘prophecy element’ of this book – as distinct from the ‘teaching element’ that we are now beginning – came to me. For the sake of those who have exercised the option of missing out Part Two temporarily, I am going to start off what I am now going to say by repeating the bare bones of that story. (The summary will only take a few short paragraphs. Even if you have already read the original, that won’t harm you!)

One summer, while searching for suitable holiday reading, I spotted, in our local library, a non-fiction escape story, set in Norway during the Second World War. I found the book so intriguing that, over the summer, I borrowed a couple more books on the same subject. Needless to say, all three featured the men and women of the Norwegian Resistance. As I completed the third of these narratives, I had the strange (but very real) sensation that the Lord was speaking to me in these terms: *“Mark these people well. They are a parable of what I want you to be like in the days ahead. They are a parable of what I want all my people to be like, as they move on into the future”*

(Incidentally, in Chapter 10, I dealt with the possibility that I might have *imagined* these words – and I shall deal with it further towards the end of this chapter. For now, all I want to do is to explain the chain of events that was triggered off by this experience.)

Because I was so convinced that my Heavenly Father had said “Mark these people well”, the first thing I did was to try to find out as much about the Norwegian Resisters as I could. So I read through biographies, and autobiographies, and history books. I pored over newspaper articles, and watched some documentaries and feature films. I even visited a ‘Resistance Museum’ in Oslo.

When I felt I had researched enough, I began to ask myself what lessons, for the Christian life, I should be learning from the ‘parable’. As I explained in Chapter 10, I started with the opening scenes of the drama – the ones that showed the disintegration of the King of Norway’s existing Army, and the introduction of the Resistance, as a kind of ‘Replacement Army’ in Norway itself. This led me to a conviction that I had a ‘prophetic word’ to deliver, along these lines: “The existing ‘Army’ of the King of Kings is going to disintegrate, and a ‘Replacement Army’, for Him, on Earth, is going to come into being.”

Even though I was fairly convinced that this was a genuine ‘Word’ for the Church, I was wary of making it generally known because, over the years, I had experienced, directly or indirectly, so many prophecies that had turned out to be false. Consequently, I embarked on a lengthy process of ‘weighing’. By the time that was done, I was completely confident, and willing to put the prophecy in writing, ready for circulation.

That is as much of the sequence-of-events as I recounted (in greater detail) in Chapter 10. However, it doesn’t actually tell the whole story of my reaction to getting the very definite impression that the Norwegian Resisters were a “parable” for the future of the Christian Church. I was just about to put pen to paper (or, more accurately, fingers to keyboard) when it suddenly occurred to me that, if I was supposed to take this ‘parable’ seriously, I was very far from finished with the vital process of learning lessons from it! I had looked at what I have called “the opening scenes of the drama”, but had not yet got round to looking at what happened *after* the Resistance Movement was actually ‘up and running’! I had considered the introductory part of the story – a part that could be headed “The Norwegian Resistance in Formation” – but I had not, at that stage, given any consideration to the much more extensive part of the story that could be entitled “The Norwegian Resistance in Action”! *I realised that if, in any way, I was going to treat this story as a parable, I was honour-bound to do justice to the entire story.*

So there began a second phase in my lesson-learning. Having

worked through the early scenes of the parable, I started to work through all its remaining scenes – the scenes that I had started to call “The King of Norway’s ‘Replacement Army’ in Action” – the scenes that showed the many ways in which those loyal to King Haakon VII were able to counteract the evil influence of the Occupying Forces, until the end of the War, and the Norwegian King’s triumphant return to his realm.

I am sure you can guess the kind of lessons-for-the-Christian-Life I learned from *that* part of the story! They were lessons about Christ’s Replacement Army in Action! They were lessons about how those loyal to Jesus will be able to counteract the Forces of Evil, (however you define that term) and serve Him, for whatever time remains before His final return. Let me put all that another way: If the opening scenes of the parable gave me a *prophecy* of soldiers being recruited to a ‘Replacement Army for Christ’, the later scenes gave me a *picture* of what was likely to be involved in being one of those soldiers!

* * * * *

It is of the utmost importance, of course, that you realise that this “picture”, which came to me through the parable, is a biblical picture. Whenever I came across activities and attitudes that were characteristic of the King of Norway’s ‘Replacement Army’ in action, *parallel after parallel from the New Testament would occur to me! Scripture after scripture would come flooding into my mind!* I soon realised that these activities and attitudes from the 1940s were analogies, or metaphors, for activities and attitudes that Jesus must be looking for in His Replacement Army. As I considered various features of the lifestyle of the Norwegian Resisters, the New Testament seemed to shout at me: “Yes! That is the kind of thing that will need to happen among Christians, from now on! These *are* the characteristics that will have to be displayed by believers, in the changing circumstances of our time!

The realisation that I was getting a “biblical picture for my future Christian service” was wonderful for me personally. I had reached

the stage of knowing, for sure, that I was a recruit in Christ’s Replacement Army – the new expression of ‘Church’ that is on its way. But I knew, also, that I was a very raw recruit. I was very confused about what ‘shape’ my Christian life was likely to take in the days ahead. Under the old system – the Institutional Church system – I had always had a clear picture of what was expected of me. I had served my Lord through my church’s programmes and projects – just as soldiers of a traditional army serve their commander-in-chief through well-organised exercises and campaigns. Now, however, my situation was somewhat different. I had left the old-style ‘regiments’. I had joined what I was calling a ‘Replacement Army’. So, what was expected of me now? What lay ahead in my Christian discipleship?

As I worked through the parable, however, I got many helpful answers. I got analogies and metaphors that highlighted what Jesus must be looking for, in me, from then on. I got a picture of the Church-of-the-Future in Action. I got biblical ‘encouragements and challenges’ for the new phase of Christian Service into which I had been drawn. *The principal purpose of Part Three of this book is to share all these ‘biblical encouragements and challenges’ with those of you who, like myself, now see yourselves as ‘recruits’ to that new lifestyle.*

* * * * *

Just before I launch into that very worthwhile task, however, I must issue a word of warning. Before you go much further, someone – most likely a fellow-Christian – is going to say to you: “You are being unbelievably naïve! This writer-guy (whom most of you don’t even know) comes along and tells you that the *Lord* has given him this ‘parable’. He doesn’t simply say that he came across the story, and thought it might help as a guide for future discipleship! Oh no! He asserts that he got the parable ‘from above’. Now that is, surely, a very debatable claim! Of course, if it really is true that the parable is ‘God-given’, that puts a different complexion on things. But how can you be sure? Is it not just as likely that the words the writer quotes (“This story is a parable... of what I want all My People to

be like..." etc., etc.) are a figment of his own imagination? How can you let your Christian lifestyle, from now on, be influenced by a book that has such questionable origins? Is this "parable" not a very dodgy basis for bible-teaching?"

My answer to that is as follows: *Bible Teaching is not to be judged on the origin of the analogies and the metaphors used! It is to be judged, solely, on whether it accurately conveys, to hearers or readers, themes that run through the written Word of God.*

Let me tell you of my own reactions, as I worked through the Norwegian Story that had come to my notice – because I believe that many of you will find yourselves re-acting in the same way. The 'Parable of the Resisters in Action' seemed to make me examine the Scriptures in a new light. It made me read the Bible asking this question: "If I were to find myself in a situation where there was no longer any traditionally-organised 'Army of the Lord' – no Institutional Church – what would the New Testament have to say to me?" When I did that, I came to two conclusions: 1) This 'parable' has pointed me to an extremely wide range of truly biblical encouragements and challenges for the future. 2) There is so much that is helpful here, that I am more convinced than ever that it was my Heavenly Father who drew my attention to the illustration!

I am confident that as *you* read Part Three, many of you will come to the same conclusions. In the first place, I think you will agree that the 'encouragements and challenges' are, indeed, biblical. I am not saying you will necessarily accept every single deduction-from-Scripture that I make, but I think that many of you will conclude that – by and large – the pages ahead contain a great deal of genuinely helpful biblical material.

In the second place, I think it possible that many of you will come to suspect that the Parable *did* have some kind of 'divine origin'. The Story of the Norwegian Resisters is so full of amazingly apt analogies for biblical truths, that you are going to have difficulty in believing that I stumbled across it just by "luck"! When you see what a rich vein of illustrative material for biblical principles this 20th-Century 'Scandinavian Saga' turns out to be – principles which, I am sure,

are going to be especially important in the changing circumstances that lie ahead for all Christians – I think it likely that quite a few of you will agree that the Lord must have had a hand in my coming across it!

Personally, I have become convinced that, in this story from Norway, the King of Kings has given his people a very special allegory for their on-going service as 'Soldiers of Christ', in these changing times. Read on, and see what you think!

CHAPTER 15: OUR FIRST AREA-OF-SERVICE: “CROSS-MY-PATH CARE”

Quite early on, in my investigations of the Norwegian ‘parable’, I realised that there were four separate “Areas of Service” to which King Haakon called the men and women of his ‘Replacement Army’. The more I thought about it, the more I realised that those areas-of-service were pointers to the areas-of-service to which Christ will be calling the men and women of *His* ‘Replacement Army’ in the days ahead. In this particular section of Part Three, therefore, I shall try to give you a picture of the Resisters at work in each one of these four areas, and to ask what we ‘Christian Resisters’ should be learning from each picture.

As I immersed myself in the fascinating story of the Norwegian Resisters in Action, the first thing I noticed was that the “war-work” that took up most time and effort in their lives was *not* what I would have expected! From my vague general-knowledge of the Second World War (and from a few Hollywood films seen in my youth) I thought that something of a definite military nature – such as sabotage, or spying – would have been their most extensive ‘area-of-service’.

To my great surprise, however, the area-of-service that took up most of their time and effort was what might best be described as “Care Work”! *There was a huge focus, in Resistance circles, on giving support to individual people who, in some way or other, were suffering as a result of the presence of the Occupying Forces.*

I want to go into quite a surprising amount of detail about this wonderful ‘Care Work’. After a few pages, you may be tempted to think that I have forgotten all about the Christian purpose of my book, and am simply telling a story of admirable human kindness. However, that is not the case. I am convinced that this area-of-

service – so basic to everything else the Norwegian ‘Replacement Army’ did – has a major lesson to teach those of us who are recruits in Christ’s Replacement Army.

* * * * *

There were two large groups of people who needed a great deal of support during those dark days. The first group consisted of those whose needs were fraught with danger and drama; the second group comprised men and women whose needs were not at all dramatic, but were very real all the same.

In the ‘dramatic’ group were the many individuals who were ‘on the run’ – dodging the Gestapo until they could escape from Norway altogether. Those most in need of making good their escape were almost certainly the Jews. In the early stages of the War, Jews were victimised in various unpleasant ways, and eventually they were faced with deportation to Concentration Camps in Germany and Poland, where their final fate would be extermination. As in all the occupied countries, the Resistance in Norway was crucial in giving Jewish families the support they needed.

There were, however, numerous other ‘Gestapo-dodgers’, trying to reach the Swedish border, or the coast – places from which they had some hope of getting to freedom. Allied air-crew, shot down over Norway, naturally wanted to get back home without being caught. Those who were already prisoners-of-war, but had managed to escape from confinement, had the same goal in mind. Even some of the Resisters themselves were ‘escapees’. They had fallen foul of the Nazi authorities in their own locality, and needed to get away – perhaps to join the Allied Armed Forces stationed in Britain, or perhaps just to lie low for a while, in some other part of Norway, until it was safe to resume Resistance activity. Whoever you were, if you were ‘on the run’, Resisters everywhere in Norway were fully committed to helping you.

Escapees, of course, are a somewhat extreme example of those

who needed some kind of assistance. At the same time, there were always plenty of “ordinary” citizens, in settled circumstances, who were also suffering because of the Nazis. There were, for instance, war-widows, left to work single-handedly on their late husbands’ small-holdings, as well as look after their children. They required a lot of practical help, in the fields and in the home. They also needed encouragement and moral support. Women in this kind of situation got most of the help they needed from people who were committed to the Resistance.

Then again, there were large numbers of young Norwegian men, trying to avoid being press-ganged into Hitler’s army, or sent to his munitions factories in Germany. They had to be assimilated into life, usually far from home. Almost always, it was to Resistance families that they turned. Let me mention, too, the disabled ex-servicemen, unable to earn a living – and discouraged because they seemed able to do very little for their families or their fellow citizens. In their case, a ‘psychological’ boost from Resisters was of even greater importance than a practical or material one.

In his broadcasts from exile, the King of Norway frequently pointed out that one of the best ways of counteracting the Occupying Forces, within Norway itself, was by giving assistance to anyone who was on the receiving-end of their harmful treatment. *As a result, the first ‘area-of-service’ the Resistance undertook was the giving of as much support as possible to individuals who were suffering, in any way, at the hands of the Enemy.*

* * * * *

The practicalities of giving that support were not as easy as they might seem. The King of Norway’s original Army had a long history of coming to the rescue of people in danger, or in particular kinds of hardship. It had often been involved in Mountain Rescue (to help climbers and skiers who had got into difficulties); in Air-Sea Rescue (in the fjords and out in the North Sea, for both commercial and leisure sailors); and in what might be called “Storm Rescue” (when, for instance, bridges to isolated communities had been washed

away, and the Army quickly constructed new ones)...and so on. In pre-war days, however, there had been no obstacles to training and equipping special military teams to tackle specific types of rescue, or to organising fairly large-scale operations to deal with situations that had arisen.

Things were very different, however, for the Norwegian King's 'Replacement Army'! No military-style teams, of any kind, were permitted under the Nazi Regime. No 'fairly large-scale operations' were possible – with the Gestapo watching every move. At the same time, the number of people needing support had grown out of all proportion to the climbers, skiers, sailors and marooned villagers of the pre-war era. How, then, were the Resisters to go about the mammoth task of supporting those who were in some kind of need, when almost nothing could be publicly organised?

There were several possible approaches to the problem, but the approach that quickly became widespread throughout the Resistance (all over Europe) was what I have come to call "Cross My Path Care". This method of caring was very straightforward. Each Resister simply kept his or her eyes open for anyone-in-need, *among the people they came across in the normal course of their lives*. Then, having found one or more individuals within their own every day orbit, they concentrated on giving those particular people whatever personal support they seemed to need, for as long as they required it.

Let me give you a few examples of typical Resistance responses: 1) You had always known that the family who lived across the road from you was Jewish. When their business was forcibly closed down in the early days of the Occupation, you helped them in various neighbourly ways. Eventually, when you hear that deportation orders are on their way, you are able to give them a contact address in the nearest large town, which starts the ball rolling in getting that family on their way to freedom. 2) In connexion with your daily work, you are travelling in a remote area, and you come across an injured airman who, having been shot down, is trying to hide his parachute. Somehow or other, you get him to your own home, and hide him there, while your wife nurses him back to health – highly

dangerous though the whole operation is, with Gestapo prowling around. 3) You find out that your work-mate has a 17-year-old son who is being pursued by the Nazi recruiting officers, and you have a relative in the north who is a fisherman looking for essential crew, so you write to your relative and arrange a job-offer that will keep the boy permanently in Norway. 4) Like many of your fellow-Norwegians, you are an out-doors type, and you learn that a fellow-member of your sports-club is harbouring an escaping family – so you volunteer to guide the would-be escapers on a leg of the journey across a stretch of the mountains that you know well. (The front cover is an actual picture supplied by the Resistance Museum of just such an event.) 5) You and your family frequently find yourselves giving food – from your own already meagre rations – to other families in your locality who are feeling the pinch even more than you are.

And so it went on... Week after week, new challenges appeared in the normal course of events. If you kept your eyes open, you realised that, under the Nazi occupation, there was always someone close by – a neighbour, a workmate, someone you encountered at leisure, or even (as often happened in these troubled times) a stranger who unexpectedly turned up in your locality, requiring some kind of support.

At first sight, this major focus on needy people within one's own immediate scene, may appear somewhat narrow-minded. It was actually, however, an amazingly broad-minded approach to the situation! The thinking went like this: "We have a network of Resisters throughout Norway. If all Resisters do their utmost for those whose lives intersect with their own, the whole country will be covered. This way, we can ensure that as few needy people as possible slip through our nation-wide 'net of care'."

That policy turned out to be highly successful. After the war, a great many escapees – of many nationalities and types – wrote accounts of their adventures. Almost without exception, they gave testimony to the fact that, over and over again, at many stages in their progress to freedom, they received crucial help from men and women of the Resistance. During the Second World War, Resisters

had a very well-deserved reputation for always being available to help anyone under pressure from the hostile forces of occupation. “Cross-My-Path Care” was amazingly effective!

* * * * *

Fellow “Resisters-for-Christ”! Fellow soldiers of “The Replacement Army of the King of Kings! Round about every one of us there are people who are suffering – in body, mind and spirit – because of ‘forces of evil’ (however you interpret that phrase) that occupy our World. In these early years of the 21st Century, I believe very strongly that Jesus is calling you to a major focus on “Cross-My-Path Care”!

There are two practical reasons, and a very powerful biblical reason, why you should throw yourselves immediately into this kind of service. The first practical reason is that, even at their best, schemes and programmes of material and spiritual care, organised by the Institutional Church, miss out on a great number of needy people. It is time to start plugging the gaps. There is a crying need for some Christians to be available for the many individuals who are *not* being helped by what the Church has already organised. I believe that those of us who are no longer part of the Institutional Church should get involved, as soon as possible, in “Cross-My-Path Care”. Keep your eyes open for people round about you who might need support of one kind or another. Many believers whom I know can testify that, if you seriously take up that challenge, it will not be long before you have plenty to do!

The second practical reason for seriously involving yourselves in “Cross-My-Path Care” is that, before very long, in an increasingly secular and anti-Christian world, church organisations and programmes are going to be severely curtailed (where they are not banned altogether!) Many Christian leaders, even within the Institutional Church, are warning that both open evangelism, and social care in the name of Christ, are going to become ‘endangered species’! There are many signs that, in the not-too-distant future, serving-others-through-organisations-and-programmes will be much more of a rarity among Christians. Norwegian ex-Army

types found that they could no longer do their ‘care-work’ in the old ways, but had simply to be on the alert for those-in-need whose lives intersected with their own. As this 21st Century unfolds, Christians are going to have a similar experience. ‘*Cross-My-Path Care*’ looks like becoming the principal area-of-service for every believer who takes seriously the fight against evil!

(For any of you who haven’t yet read Part Two, I should point out that the whole of Chapter Six is about the huge threat that is developing for church organisations and programmes, especially in the so-called ‘democracies of the West’. If you are not convinced that the era of church-based programmes is gradually drawing to a close, you might do well to read Chapter Six right now, and then return to this point.)

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There is no reason, however, for Christians to be unduly alarmed by the restrictions on ‘organisational’ care. If you think about it, ‘*Cross-My-Path Care*’ was the style of service adopted by both Jesus Himself, and the first Christians. Organisations and projects were totally absent from Jesus’ ministry. He simply dealt with people and situations as He came across them. As for the Early Church, schemes and programmes (as we shall see in Chapter 23) played only a small part in the care it offered to the world. Nevertheless, in spite of this seemingly casual approach, both Jesus and the Early Church quickly gained reputations for genuinely caring about those with physical, mental, social and spiritual needs.

All the same, Jesus didn’t leave it to chance that we would copy His example. *He positively taught that His followers should make ‘Cross-My-Path Care’ a high priority in their lives.* He often used a five-word phrase which, I believe, makes this clear. I am talking, of course, about the phrase: “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF”. As this chapter draws to a close, we need to give some thought to this key instruction from the Lord.

The fullest report we have of Jesus discussing these words is in Luke, chapter 10, and verses 25 to 37. A teacher-of-the-law brought up the phrase “Love your neighbour” (which is actually mentioned, on one occasion, in the Old Testament). Then he asked Jesus to define the word ‘neighbour’. That was what led Jesus to tell the famous story we call “The Good Samaritan”. From that story it emerges that, according to Jesus, the term ‘your neighbour’ is not confined to people who live in your own neighbourhood – though it does, of course, include such people – but it also means *anyone who crosses your path*. The lesson of the Parable is that, for the believer, “neighbour” means *anyone whose life, somehow, intersects with your life*. By “Loving your Neighbour”, then, Jesus seems to mean something very similar to what I have called “Cross-My-Path Care”.

The Gospels give four other accounts of occasions when Jesus talks about “Loving your Neighbour”. (Matthew 5:43; 19:16-22; 22:34-40; and Mark 12:28-34.) If you look at each of these accounts carefully, you will see that they are four quite separate incidents. There are crucial differences between each of the accounts that show they are not alternative reports of the same incident. All in all, Jesus seems to take quite a number of opportunities of commending “Neighbour Love” (or, as I call it, “Cross-My-Path Care”) to those who say they want to do God’s work.

To be completely fair to Jesus’ teaching, however, I have to point out that He goes much further than simply “commending” Neighbour-Love. He wants it to be a top priority in the life of a believer! In the conversation reported in Mark’s Gospel (12:28-34), someone asked Jesus: “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” Not unexpectedly, the Lord answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”. However, although He had been asked to nominate only one commandment for ‘top place’, He immediately went on to say: “The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. There is no commandment greater than these.” (Although He seems to be speaking to a different person in Matthew 22:34-40, He makes exactly the same point there.) Jesus’ answer to “Which is the most important commandment?” is this:

“There are *two* commandments that have that honour: *loving God and loving any person-in-need who crosses your path.*”

A few paragraphs ago I said that there was a powerful biblical reason why we should be involved in this informal ‘area-of-service’. This is it: Jesus has said, from the start, that “Cross-My-Path Care” should be a top priority for every Christian.

* * * * *

Fellow Soldiers of “The Replacement Army of the King of Kings! We too, like the men and women of the King of Norway’s ‘Replacement Army’, are surrounded by people who are suffering, to a greater or lesser degree, in the rather dark days in which we live. As was the case in 1940s Norway, some of these people are in serious danger of one kind or another. In every community there are the very deprived, and there are those whose lives are dramatically off-the-rails: mentally, morally and spiritually. Alongside these people, however, there are also those whose needs are much more “ordinary”, but are very real all the same: the lonely; the discouraged; those with too much to cope with; those who are trapped in confining situations; those with no firm moral or spiritual compass. Jesus calls us to care for them also.

Let us, then, like the Norwegian Resisters, keep our eyes open for anyone-in-need, among the people we come across in the normal course of our lives. Then, having found one or more individuals within our own every-day orbit, let us concentrate on giving those particular people whatever backing they seem to need, for as long as they require it. Let us grasp that there is always someone close by – a neighbour, a workmate, someone we encounter at leisure, or even a stranger who unexpectedly turns up in our locality – who would value some kind of support. Let us make “Cross-My-Path Care” a high priority in our lives.

There is, however, more that needs to be said about this particular ‘area of service’. Some of the other areas-of-service – though just

as vital – can be explained more briefly, but I need to take two more chapters to ensure that we fully understand the biblical implications of the challenging concept of “Cross-My-Path Care”.

CHAPTER 16: THE ‘EXTRA DIMENSION’ THAT ADDED SO MUCH TO “CROSS- MY-PATH CARE”

At various points in the previous chapter, I mentioned that the care given by the Resistance to people in need – both in Norway and all over Europe – was excellent. In some ways it could be described as “legendary”. There are thousands of testimonies in different languages (especially from escapees) to the part played by the Resisters in helping those who were undergoing hardship under the Nazi regime.

Some of you may be amazed that an approach that was as casual as what I have called “Cross-My-Path Care” was so successful. Nowhere in Europe was there much opportunity for supportive organisations to be set up by the Resisters (because of the opposition of the authorities) and yet, somehow or other, people-in-need were marvellously helped.

I must tell you, however, that there was an ‘extra dimension’ to how the Resisters operated – something else they were able to do, over and above simply keeping their eyes open for people-in-need within their own everyday experience, and helping them as best they could. *By the same token, there is a very similar ‘extra dimension’ to how we Christians can operate – something else we can do to make “Cross-My-Path Care” as effective as it was in New Testament times.*

I want to take a few paragraphs to tell you about one particularly impressive achievement of the Norwegian Resistance. Then I shall explain the ‘extra dimension’ that lay behind that success. Finally, in the second half of the chapter, I shall show you that this is a good analogy for an approach to Christian Service that we ‘Replacement

Note: The photograph on the front cover, which has been supplied by the Norwegian Resistance Museum in Oslo, was taken in the 1940s. It shows a group of escapees being accompanied on a leg of their escape route by a number of Resistance men and women. “Cross-My-Path Care” in action!

Army Recruits' will need to enter into, wholeheartedly, in the days ahead.

* * * * *

A few pages back, I told you that those in most urgent need of help in Nazi-occupied Europe were the Jews. So far as Norway was concerned, persecution of Jews began comparatively mildly. However, in the late summer of 1942, the occupying regime suddenly announced that "Deportation Orders" would be issued to all Norwegian Jews "as soon as possible". All Jews were to be shipped to Germany for some unspecified purpose which, even at the time, looked sinister (and which we now know was their eventual destruction in death camps such as Auschwitz). It suddenly dawned on everyone that the only realistic hope for Jewish individuals, or families, was for them to get out of Norway immediately, before the Gestapo caught up with them. Somehow or other, they had to make arrangements to escape over the mountains to neutral Sweden – from whence they might get to Britain, or Canada, or the United States.

There were, however, many huge problems involved in such an undertaking. If you were a family trying to escape, you had to know a route across the mountains – a route that avoided areas that were well patrolled by the enemy. You had to get hold of false papers – to deal with any Nazi guards encountered on the way. You had to get a series of guides with the experience to accompany you on the various legs of the difficult journey. You had to find places to stay overnight – places that could accommodate you without drawing attention to the fact that an extra family was there. You had to bear in mind that you might have to stay in a particular place for several days – or even, possibly, for several weeks – if bad weather, or illness, held up your progress. Finally, you would need money for all this. Even if your fellow-Norwegians were generous, you would have to be prepared to pay for accommodation and transport once you left your own homeland. Not all Jewish families were wealthy, and even the wealthy ones would find that much of their money was tied-up, because of Nazi laws about leaving the

country.

All these challenging problems had to be sorted out in three months at most, before your deportation orders were delivered to you. Even making-the-arrangements seemed a desperately challenging prospect – let alone the journey itself! Many Jews were initially overcome by a sense of hopelessness. However, the outcome far exceeded their highest expectations. Things worked out wonderfully!

Thanks to the Resistance, by the time the process of deportation actually began, in November 1942, more than half the entire Jewish population of Norway had already been successfully shuttled to safety along escape-lines to Sweden – and many of the rest got away later. The whole thing was brilliant! A genuine "Success Story"!

* * * * *

What made it so brilliant? Well, two factors really. In the first place, there was the organisation that was done at Headquarters-Across-the-Sea. (The Allied High Command had set up a joint HQ in un-occupied Britain.) Yes! The work of the Resisters was thoroughly organised, but it was not organised on the spot, or anywhere in Norway, but in a distant location across the North Sea.

Frankly, nothing that could have been organised within Norway alone could have compared to what was possible from Allied Headquarters. Headquarters was in a position to get to know the over-all situation. By building up a picture from intelligence reports, Headquarters knew where the smallest (and, therefore, least threatening) concentrations of Nazi troops were; and they also knew where the largest groups of loyal resisters were. Headquarters also knew, through local Agents they had in each area, which families were willing, and able, to shelter escapees in their homes, and which citizens were suitable as guides across difficult terrain. All this meant that HQ was able to work out the best possible escape routes for any individual or group of individuals.

Furthermore, with Europe-wide experience, Headquarters had information about methods for concealing escapers in 'ordinary' homes. HQ understood precisely what identification papers were required to pacify any guards who stopped the fugitives along the way, and had training-techniques for the production of such documents. HQ could even supply money, and arrange for passages to America. Human organisation always has its weaknesses, of course, and "centralisation" is not always the best way of dealing with local circumstances. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that, in the World War Two situation, Allied Headquarters-Across-the-Sea – with its over-all view of what was going on – was the best place for organisation to be done.

That leads me to the other factor in the Norwegian Resisters' success in spiriting away a surprisingly high proportion of the Jewish population of their country, before the Gestapo could get hold of them. In the second place, there were, all over Norway, Special Agents, sent over from Headquarters-Across-the-Sea, and always in close touch with their base. The local Agent was able to direct operations on the spot, in accordance with the wisdom that came from HQ.

Before one of these Special Resistance Agents was sent to his allotted sphere of operation, however, he was thoroughly and rigorously trained. By the time he took up his post, he was fully aware, not only of the best practical ways of dealing with tricky situations that might arise, but also of the over-all philosophy of the High Command on key issues connected with the struggle against the Nazis.

When he began his actual work in Norway, the Agent remained in close contact with Headquarters by personal radio. This was not a run-of-the-mill radio like the domestic 'wireless'. It was a specially-designed radio – very short-wave, and very high-frequency. Throughout the war, there were only enough of those particular radios for the Special Agents to have one. (Some ordinary resisters might still have ordinary radios, which they had to keep hidden, of course. On these they could hear the news bulletins from the BBC, and encouraging broadcasts, of a general nature, by their King.)

Only the Agent, however, got messages from HQ which related to specific situations.

The "Sent-Over" Agent in any district, then, because of his intimate knowledge of Headquarters policy, and because of his special radio-link, was able to convey to each local Resister what part he or she could best play in any overall plan. Not only that, but he was in a unique position to co-ordinate the contribution of the whole local group.

That's why such a high proportion of Norwegian Jews escaped. It was because Resisters, in addition to keeping their eyes open for needy people in their own everyday experience, and doing what they could to help, got very useful guidance from a Special Agent stationed somewhere in their locality. He would approach them when he saw that there was something they could do, and they could approach him if they didn't know what to do next. Wherever escapees moved, an Agent was in the vicinity to advise on their further progress. He was a shadowy figure, who remained as inconspicuous as possible, but he was instrumental in bringing about real results among the Resisters.

At the beginning of this chapter, I promised to explain the "Extra Dimension" that added so much to the "Cross-My-Path Care" given by the 'Replacement Army' of the King of Norway. The "Extra Dimension" in the Resisters' lives was the presence, in their midst, of a "Sent-Over Agent" who, because of his intimate connection with Headquarters, could direct the activities of individual Resisters in occupied territory, in accordance with all the wisdom and knowledge that the High Command possessed.

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*Brothers and Sisters of the Replacement Army of the King of Kings!
A very similar "Extra Dimension" exists in our lives! A "Sent-Over Agent" is in our midst! He is none other than the Holy Spirit. Because of the Spirit's intimate connection with our "High Command", He is*

able to direct our activities here on Earth, in accordance with all the wisdom and knowledge of God! I believe that, like the 'Cross-My-Path Care' given by the Norwegian Resisters, our "Cross-My-Path Care" can be remarkably effective, if our "Sent-Over" Guide is involved.

You will have spotted, of course, that the Resisters had a different Agent for every district, whereas believers have the same Holy Spirit, no matter where they are on Earth. The principle is still the same, however: "Cross-My-Path Care" works well, when it is masterminded in a place that has a genuine overall-view of what is going on, and step-by-step instructions are then conveyed to those who are willing to do the caring.

I am convinced that this approach to "Cross-My-Path Care" was a major factor in the success of the first Christians. All through the book of "Acts" we see the Holy Spirit as a shadowy figure in the background, who, nevertheless, makes His presence known, if believers need some guidance. Let me give you a few examples....

Simon Peter had just awakened from a dream-filled sleep on the roof-top of the house where he was staying, when, as we read in Acts 10:19-20, "The Spirit said to him: 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'" Simon Peter might well have hesitated, because these men were not of the Jewish faith, and the practice of devout Jews was to avoid mixing socially with 'Gentiles'. His obedience to the Holy Spirit's guidance, however, led to the conversion of a Roman centurion. It also led to something much wider – Peter's extensive, and highly successful, work among the Gentiles.

There are several references in Acts to the Spirit's direct intervention in the activities of the Apostle Paul. Look, for example, at Acts 16: 6-8, where Paul and his companions are twice warned by the Spirit to avoid areas they were about to enter (probably because these areas would have been a diversion from what God wanted them to do next – take the Gospel to mainland Europe!)

The guidance of the Spirit, however, was not limited to the Apostles. Other believers heard (and obeyed) the voice of God's special "Sent-Over Agent". In Acts 8, for instance, a believer named Philip was travelling along a desert road when he saw a chariot approaching. Verse 29 recounts: "The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it'". (The Spirit was more-or-less saying: "Hitch a lift"!)

You will remember that this encounter led to the instruction of the 'Ethiopian Eunuch' in the Christian faith, and to his conversion and his baptism. Did you know, however, that three centuries later, when Christian missionaries from the Mediterranean area reached mountainous Ethiopia, they found that there was already a thriving Church in that country! It seems that Philip's obedience to the Spirit may have led, in the long run, to the coming-to-faith of many Ethiopians – not just one! (Another "success story", because the Spirit did the organising!) Incidentally, when the baptism was over, "the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away" (v. 39) and he started a new and fruitful life in a completely different area. The Spirit's guidance is not just "one-off". It is an on-going experience.

Some of you may feel, from the examples I have given, that the Spirit was only interested in directing what we might call 'Evangelistic Work', and not in the more general 'Care-Work' of which I have been speaking – the 'Neighbour-Love' which Jesus commends to us. Caring about people's spiritual condition is a vital part of caring about our neighbours, but Jesus makes it clear that their physical and material and mental condition is important too. (Take His statement in Matthew 25:35-36, for instance: "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you looked after me....") Was the Spirit interested in directing that kind of "Cross-My-Path" work in New Testament times? I believe He was – very much so....

In Acts 2, verses 1 to 41, there is an extensive account, often entitled "The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost". We are told how all the earliest believers were together in one place, and each one of them experienced the Spirit's coming. Immediately after that (verse 42 to the end of the chapter) there is a report about the effect

this experience had on the whole company of the first Christians. Among other things, we read: “*They gave to anyone as he had need...enjoying the favour of all the people*” (Acts 2: 45, 47.) One of the outcomes of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst was a “Cross-My-Path Care” that the general public recognised as being outstanding!

We find a very similar account at the end of Acts 4. Acts 4:31 shows that there had been another encounter with the Holy Spirit (possibly affecting the two thousand new converts who had been added to the Christian group since Acts 2). This time Luke writes: “No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had...there were no needy persons among them.” (Acts 4:32, 34.) Some writers, commenting on this passage, have argued that the phrase “no needy persons among them” means that their generosity was limited to their fellow-Christians. However, shortly after (in Acts 5:13), while still dealing with the same series of events, Luke adds: “They were highly regarded by the people”. I find it difficult to believe that a group of men and women who were only interested in being a blessing to their own ‘in-group’ would be “highly regarded” by the general public! Once again, the presence of the Spirit in their midst seems to have led to impressive “Cross-My-Path Care”.

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In the previous chapter, I suggested that the first ‘area of service’, for those of us in the Replacement Army of the King of Kings, is “Cross-My-Path Care”. I claimed that, because organised Christian activity will be increasingly forbidden, or severely limited, in the days ahead, this type of care will be the best way (and often the only way) of serving others. As you were reading that last chapter, however, some of you may have thought that the kind of approach I was advocating would be far too unorganised – far too ‘hit and miss’ – to achieve very much. I hope you see, now, that I am not urging you to adopt a style-of-care that is lacking in organisation, and seems to leave rather a lot to ‘chance’. Quite the reverse! I am suggesting a style-of-care that is skilfully organised by the Holy

Spirit, as it was in New Testament times.

(I know, of course, that the many secularists who are so outspoken in Western countries, at the present time, will hoot with derision at the idea of “organisation by the Holy Spirit”. Many of you who are reading this, however, will have personally experienced, and also observed in the lives of others, the remarkable influence of the Spirit at various points in chains-of-events that ended positively – so you know what I am talking about.)

Let us, then, like the Norwegian Resisters, keep our eyes open for anyone in need of any kind of support, among those we come across in the normal course of our lives. Having become aware of them, let us concentrate on giving them whatever backing is necessary, for as long as they require it.

However, let us keep our ears open, as well as our eyes. There is a “Sent-Over Agent” in our midst! Because of His intimate connection with our ‘High Command’, He is able to convey to each of us what part we should play in any overall plan. He can approach us when He sees that there is something we can do, and we can approach Him if we don’t know what to do next. Wherever people round about us need support, our Agent is in the vicinity to advise us. Just as the Norwegian Resisters, in their “Cross-My-Path Care”, constantly availed themselves of the guidance and help of their “Sent-Over Agent”, let us ‘Replacement Army Recruits’, in our “Cross-My-Path Care”, constantly avail ourselves of the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit.

Let us make “Cross-My-Path Care” a very high priority in our lives – but let us be very sure that it is Spirit-led Cross-My-Path Care.

CHAPTER 17: ABSOLUTELY ANYONE (IN GENUINE NEED) 'QUALIFIES' FOR OUR CARE

Another aspect of the Resisters' caring-lifestyle that impressed me a lot was the fact that they were extremely open-minded about who they helped. They completely ignored all the usual barriers of race, religion, politics, social-standing and compatibility.

You could be an escaped prisoner-of-war of any nationality, and the Resistance would nurse you back to health, and move you along an escape route. You could be a Jew, or a Roman Catholic, or an atheist – but the Resisters, with their predominantly Lutheran backgrounds, would do all they could to assist you, in whatever predicament you found yourself in. You could be the son of a wealthy industrialist, dodging forced labour in Hitler's 'Fatherland', and Resistance small-holders would find appropriate identification papers for you, and involve you in their village life. (The reverse situation was equally true; "social standing" became irrelevant.) You could be smelly and ill-kempt – as anyone who had been 'on the run' for any length of time was bound to be – and the Resisters would still welcome you. You could be a Communist, dependent for help on the Norwegian Resistance – which was almost exclusively 'Royalist' – and they would not let you down.

(Perhaps I should digress for a moment, and take this opportunity to point out that the Resistance in Norway, by contrast with almost all the other underground movements throughout Europe, was totally centred on the King of the country! Nowadays, it is probably quite difficult to appreciate how warmly most Norwegians felt about Haakon VII. In the years before the War, his popularity had grown steadily. After he went into exile in the UK, he became a driving force in the formation of the Norwegian Resistance, and,

throughout hostilities, he took a daily part in its direction. One of the telling evidences of his standing was the fact that the logo adopted by the Norwegian Resistance was a large H with a smaller 7 through the centre bar – symbolic of Haakon the Seventh. That was a frequently-used piece of graffiti during the occupation years! It boldly said: “Our King is the one we look to – and he is coming back”! In this respect, the Norwegian Resistance is a particularly good allegory for those whose lives are centred on the King of Kings.)

The main point I want to make in this chapter, however, is that the Resisters would help *anyone* in need, even though they might not naturally relate to that person. I hope it is obvious that those of us who are recruits of the ‘Replacement Army’ will need to react in the same way.

During His time on Earth, Jesus ignored all the barriers. He ignored the barrier of Race. He was perfectly willing to go to the home of an Italian whose servant was gravely ill (the Roman Centurion – see Matthew 8:5-13). He checked that a Greek woman who asked for his help was in earnest, but He dealt fully with her problem. (Mark 7:24-30). He ignored the barrier of Religion. He used a Samaritan, whom his hearers would certainly have considered a ‘heretic’, as an example of godly care for others. (The parable of “The Good Samaritan” – Luke 10:30-37). On another occasion, he gladly chatted to a Samaritan woman, in spite of her extremely dodgy theology, and, later on to her friends. (John 4:4-30, and 39-42).

Jesus also ignored the political barriers. When He was ‘recruiting’ his inner circle of disciples, he approached both Matthew, who worked actively for the ‘imperialist’ government set up by Rome, and also Simon (the one nicknamed “the Zealot” in Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13) who was almost certainly part of an aggressively anti-Roman political group. He ignored the barriers of what is often called “class”. He associated with rich and poor alike. Finally, He wasn’t even put off by people whom most of his contemporaries found disgusting. He willingly had physical contact, for instance, with those who were afflicted by the dreaded disease of leprosy. If we are to be like Jesus, we will need to learn – as the Norwegian

Resisters certainly did – to ignore all those barriers of race, religion, politics, social standing and compatibility.

* * * * *

There was one sector of the community, however, whom the Resisters refused to have anything to do with. They resolutely ignored these people, and, if anyone in this group got into trouble (as, eventually, they often did) the Resisters left them to ‘stew in their own juice’. I am talking, of course, about those Norwegians who intentionally and actively collaborated with the Nazis. The Resisters despised such traitors, and avoided all contact with them.

In society in general, there are people who seem to collaborate actively with evil - men and woman who, by almost anyone’s standards, can be labelled as “bad people”. *Amazingly, the New Testament instructs us Christians to go one better than the Resisters! We are to make a point of associating with ‘bad people’ as well as ‘good people’! We are not, of course, to co-operate, in any way, with their wrong-doing – but we are told to love even those who seem to be very much on the side of evil!*

Once again, Jesus is our example, and our teacher. He went out of his way to socialise with those whom religious people described as ‘sinners’. Both Matthew and Luke report that many devout Jews forcefully complained that Jesus was coming across as “The Friend of Sinners”. (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). One of the sermons that shaped my life in earlier years was a talk by a very wise preacher from New Zealand – John Beaumont – who impressed those verses on my heart. He pointed out that, if we are to be truly like Jesus, each one of us will need to be a ‘Friend of Sinners’ also!

Jesus follows up his personal example by specific teaching. Remember the passage in the “Sermon on the Mount”: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy’. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes

his sun to rise on the evil *and* the good, and sends rain on the righteous *and* the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get...and if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5: 43-48)

Luke reports very similar teaching by Jesus: “Love your enemies, *do good to those who hate you*, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you...Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.” (Luke 6: 27, 35).

In the light of such an example, and such teaching, it is difficult to see why so many Christians seem to socialise almost exclusively with their fellow-Christians – their ‘brothers and sisters’. Paul tries to counteract this tendency, in writing to the Corinthians: “I have written to you in my letter not to associate with ... immoral people – not at all meaning people of this world who are immoral... You must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother, but is...immoral . What business is it of mine to judge those who are outside the church?” (1 Cor. 5: 9-12).

Obviously, I myself have put in the underlining and italics. I have also, to keep things simple, missed out the specific examples of immorality that Paul selects on this particular occasion. I have done these things, however, to make a very clear point: *Both Jesus, and Paul, expect us to be associating with ‘sinners’ – not engaging in their sins, of course, but getting alongside them all the same!*

It is quite a challenge to love our ‘enemies’, and to love, also, those who are clearly engaged in some evil practice or other. I cannot pretend that I have found it all that easy. However, another comment from the Apostle Paul has helped me a great deal. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul says: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against...the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil...” (Eph. 6:12). Paul seems to be saying that our real enemies are not *people* (not individual human beings), but ‘*powers*’ – powers that are at work in the world. Our real enemies are not

our *fellow-men*, but ‘*forces*’ – ‘spiritual forces-of-evil’).

Throughout the Christian church as a whole, phrases like ‘dark powers’ and ‘spiritual forces of evil’ have been interpreted in various ways. One interpretation is that everything can be explained in terms of the Devil and his unseen, but very active, minions – subtly wreaking havoc in this broken world. A diametrically opposite viewpoint is that the ‘forces of evil’ are “factors” that have become entrenched in our social systems and need to be identified one by one, and eradicated. Yet another interpretation is that both these explanations have some validity, and should have a place in our thinking. Later on in the book, I’ll tell you where (if anyone is interested) you can find my views on this in greater detail. Here, however, I simply want to concentrate on this point: *None of the people we meet face to face – no ‘flesh and blood’ individuals – are our real enemies. Our real enemies are the insidious ‘forces’ (however you interpret them) that occupy our World, and adversely affect absolutely everyone, to a greater or lesser degree.*

My way of coping, therefore, with the command to love-across-the-whole-spectrum, has been to regard anybody I come across as my fellow-citizen in a World where the forces-of evil oppress us all, one way or another. In many African and Caribbean countries, people call each other “brother” and “sister”, irrespective of race, religion, blood relationship, or any other distinction. I accept that the New Testament encourages believers to use the terms “brother” and “sister” for our fellow-Christians, but I suggest that the Bible, nevertheless, strongly supports the attitude that lies behind that Afro-Caribbean practice: treating everyone as a member of the world-wide human family, among which Evil causes a great deal of dysfunction. Paul’s assertion that we are “not fighting against flesh and blood” has made me see everyone I meet as my ‘fellow-human-being’.

(Incidentally, this ‘fellow-human-being’ attitude is very important, no matter *who* it is we are in touch with. If you think of your self as someone apart – a “knight in shining armour” reaching down to weaker brethren – people will find you patronising and obnoxious. If, on the other hand, you see yourself (as the Resisters certainly

did) as *a fellow-citizen* in a World oppressed by Evil – *as an equal in the struggle* who, at the present time, is in a position to lend a helping hand – people will accept your support, in the same way as the victims of Nazi oppression gladly accepted the help the Resisters offered. We must understand that there is a sense in which we are *on the same side as the rest of humanity.*)

Another personal approach that I have found helpful – in the challenge of loving even those who are deeply involved in wrongdoing – is to see such people as ‘victims’ – victims of the powers that are at work in this dark world. (Please note that I am *not* saying that our Justice Systems should be dominated by that approach. I accept that people who are a danger to others need to be restrained or restricted in some way. In addition to imposing restraints and restrictions, of course, society should ask “What has made this person act in this way?”, and seek, if at all possible, to do something about that. Nevertheless, I am not advocating that criminals should suffer no restraints, because they are ‘victims’.) However, as a *personal approach* – for use by those of us who accept Paul’s words about ‘flesh and blood’ not being our real enemies – I suggest that treating those whom we strongly dislike, and those who are blatant sinners, as ‘victims’, is quite a helpful rule-of-thumb. *However we go about it, though, we must follow Jesus’ example, and do as much for the ‘blatant sinners’ who come across our paths as we do for the ‘decent people’ we meet!*

* * * * *

That brings me to the end of what I have to say about “Cross-My-Path Care”. Before we go on to the next ‘area-of-service’, however, let me touch briefly on an aspect of this book that some readers may find a bit of a stumbling block.

The potential problem is connected with the fact that, in every chapter since I started “Part Three”, there have been many quotations from the Bible. It could be said that each ‘plateful of food-for-thought’, which I have laid before you, has included surprisingly large ‘helpings’ of scripture – and that is set to continue!

Some Christians, of course, are very familiar with that kind of approach, and actually welcome it. For instance, many of those who wrote to me about my earlier little book, “Custom and Command”, specifically mentioned that they had appreciated the thorough biblical treatment that was given to each individual theme.

Not everyone, however, is used to the inclusion of just so many bible-quotes – and even those who *are* used to it, may begin to feel that they might well get ‘spiritual indigestion’, if they keep encountering that style of Christian teaching, chapter after chapter, in a full-length book. (“Custom and Command” was really just a ‘booklet’.)

My reason for writing in this strongly ‘biblical’ way is as follows: I believe that, just as we need a ‘balanced diet’ for our physical well-being, we also need a balanced diet for our spiritual well-being. For maintenance and growth in a specifically *Christian* life, we need a healthy mixture of stimulating comments, apt analogies, and relevant biblical truth. Without the last-mentioned, you may be getting some good guidelines-for-life, but you are not necessarily getting *God’s* guidelines-for-life.

I would like to make a suggestion that I think may be useful to absolutely anyone reading this book: *Take a break, every now and again. Treat every few chapters – or even every individual chapter – as a ‘separate meal’, and allow a decent interval (‘between meals’, as it were) to allow yourself to digest what you have taken in!*

Let me present that very same point in a completely different way, which may help to underline what I am saying. Firstly, remember that the background I have had, for writing on Christian topics, has been the many years I spent as a ‘preacher’. That has meant that, as I have been writing each chapter of this present book, I have often felt as if I were preparing a sermon on the subject, or getting ready to speak on the chapter-topic at a conference. To all intents and purposes, then, each chapter of this book is a separate ‘sermon’ or ‘talk’.

Now, consider this: Churchgoers wouldn't listen to a whole series of sermons, one-after-the-other, without a pause. They would have, at the very least, a Sunday afternoon in between – if not a whole week to mull over what has been said. Similarly, conference-goers are unlikely to listen to several addresses non-stop, without intervening recreation-times. By the same token, neither do readers of Christian Literature (and especially of Bible-Teaching) need to read chapter after chapter, without pauses and intervals.

It is always flattering for an author, when a reviewer says of his or her work: "I couldn't put the book down!" However, I would much rather that your comments on *this* book – and on any other book in the same 'highly-biblical' style – were more along these lines: "*I put the book down from time to time, so that I could properly absorb what had been said. After a break, I was ready to press on.*"

You are completely free, of course, to read books in any manner you choose – but it is my considered opinion that most people get the best out of any kind of 'spiritual sustenance' by avoiding 'gulping it down'!

* * * * *

Let us turn now to the second area-of-service that King Haakon looked-for from those who were loyal to him. That, too, has much to teach about the Christian Life in the days ahead.

CHAPTER 18: OUR SECOND AREA-OF-SERVICE: KEEPING "HEADQUARTERS TRUTH" FLOWING FREELY

During the very early stages of the Second World War, the opinions and wishes of the King of Norway continued to be widely heard throughout his land – even though he was exiled in the UK! This was because, almost immediately after the Nazis began their occupation of the country, the BBC started broadcasting to Norway (in Norwegian), and a prominent feature of that service was a fairly regular radio-talk by King Haakon VII.

Another valuable aspect of the BBC's Norwegian Service was a series of frequent News Bulletins. Any successes for the Allies, either on the wider military front, or through the local Resistance, were well publicised. Of course, the BBC also reported setbacks to the Allied cause – but, the fact remains: news of what Allied Headquarters was advising, and achieving, was available to anyone who cared to listen.

Hitler soon realised that this was a weakness in his plan for over-all control of Norway. He did not want the Norwegians to hear what the King had to say, or how his cause was progressing. The first thing he did, to counteract the influence of what was coming from Allied Headquarters, was to flood Norwegian newspapers, and State-Radio programmes, with material conveying an entirely different emphasis. Copies of the national newspapers of the period give the impression that the Allied cause was having absolutely no effect, and that the King of Norway was a meaningless and pathetic figure who cared nothing for his people. (As we shall see in a later chapter, an attempt was even made to convey that same impression through the schools and the libraries.)

There is no doubt that the ever-increasing deluge of propaganda, against the King and his cause, did have a detrimental effect on the general public in Norway. Nevertheless, no one had, at that particular stage, worked out how to put limits on the widespread “freedom of the airwaves” that had come about since the appearance of the radio on the world scene. The occupying forces had managed to seize control of the State Broadcasting Service in Oslo, but it was not immediately clear how they could put restrictions on the airwaves themselves, and stop ‘Truth from Allied Headquarters’ from reaching Norwegian ears.

By the autumn of 1941, however – two years after the Second World War had begun – the authorities in Norway had thought of a method of silencing the King’s ‘news and views’! They announced that the ownership of radios (or ‘wirelesses’ as they were called in those days) was going to be banned completely! To be found in possession of a wireless was made a punishable offence, which could lead to imprisonment, exile to Germany, or even death! Homes were systematically visited, and thoroughly searched, so that all wirelesses could be confiscated. *In due course, it appeared that a stranglehold had finally been put on communication from the King! It seemed that the free flow of Truth-from-Headquarters-Overseas was going to be blocked completely!*

To my mind, there are some very clear parallels between the situation I have been describing in 1940s Norway, and the situation that has been developing over the past sixty years, on the Christian scene.

First of all, since the beginning of the downward slide of the Institutional Church in the West (i.e. mid 20th Century), a greatly increased amount of anti-Christian material has appeared in our ‘media’, in our educational systems, and on the shelves of our bookstores and libraries. Mind you, I am not-at-all against Christians being challenged in the media, in books, or wherever. As the apostle Peter once pointed out, we should always be prepared, and willing, “to give an answer...for the hope that is in us” (1 Peter 3:15). The problem is that the stream of material that ‘rubbishes’ our King and His cause has now reached ‘flood’ proportions! Our

media, our literature, and our school systems give the over-all impression that Christianity is pointless, and that God – if He exists at all – is a meaningless and pathetic figure who cares nothing for the people of His World.

The deluge of anti-Christian material has obviously had its effect on the general public everywhere, but – up till the end of the 20th Century, at any rate – it didn’t put a stranglehold on the words of the King of Kings! Even while that ‘downward slide of the Institutional Church’ was taking place, there was still no problem about hearing the voice of the King of Kings, if you wanted to hear it. The Bible could still be freely bought or distributed; Christian Teaching could be freely given in Churches, on the Radio and on Television, and even – in some places, at least – in schools. There were no restrictions on Christian ‘Evangelism’, or on the public distribution of Christian Literature. (I am talking about ‘Western’ countries, of course.) There were no curbs on news about what God was doing, or news about what His People were doing.

There was a reason for this. Until recently, no one had worked out how to put limits on the concept of “freedom of speech” that had become widespread since the appearance of Constitutional Democracy on the world scene. In countries where freedom-of-speech was highly valued, no one had thought of a way of restricting the public proclamation of Christian Truth. Because freedom-of-speech was considered a keystone of Western society, the Churches could operate freely, and mount their schemes of evangelism and social care, in the name of Christ.

In recent years, however, a new factor has entered the equation. In theory, freedom-of-speech is still allowed – *but, nowadays, in the multi-cultural societies of the West, you mustn’t say, or do, anything that might conceivably ‘offend’ someone else, particularly someone of another religion to yourself.* In practice, therefore, freedom-of-speech is beginning to be severely limited.

Once again, I am not against laws that prevent highly-charged provocation of others, and the deliberate stirring-up of trouble. I feel, however, that putting a stop to the mere expression of a contrary

opinion is “over the top”. Also, I question whether, in a multi-cultural society, anyone has the right to be *excessively* sensitive. Should people really be free to take offence at every little thing? (In my view, we Christians – like Jesus, in the hours before the Cross – have put up with plenty of mocking, and ‘insults’, without making an undue fuss.) I agree that there is a place for putting curbs on people who stir up hatred, but I greatly fear that freedom-of-speech has been dealt a cruel blow in the so-called “democracies”!

As a consequence, the binding and gagging of public projects, run by Christians, is now underway. I described this process, in some detail, in Chapter Six, but I suspect that there are few readers (certainly in Britain) who have not themselves noticed that this is beginning to happen. There is still a long way to go, of course, before the ‘binding and gagging’ reaches its climax. Just as it took some time to root out the radios that were the channels through which the news and views of the King of Norway had customarily been heard, it will take some time to root out the Christian projects and organisations through which the news and views of the King of Kings have been customarily heard. Nevertheless, that is the way we are heading. *It appears that a stranglehold is finally being put on the views of our King! It seems that the free flow of Truth from our Headquarters is, in due course, going to be blocked completely!*

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So far as the Norwegian story is concerned, King Haakon was not prepared to be silenced. *He asked all Resisters to play their part in keeping “Headquarters’ Truth” flowing.* Here’s what happened: In every district, the Resistance Agent (sent over from Headquarters) made arrangements, in spite of the huge dangers involved, for one or two wirelasses to be preserved – hidden in the homes of Resistance personnel. The householders involved were asked to go on listening (secretly) to the broadcasts, and to make careful notes of all that was said. These notes were then used in two ways.

Firstly, they were used for passing on the Words of the King, and the News of his Cause, *in ordinary conversation.* In the first few

weeks the Resisters were, understandably, very wary indeed. They tended to limit their ‘gossiping of the good news’ to those whom they knew, for certain, were fellow-resisters. As time passed, however, they learned how to recognise who, among the people round about them, were ready and open to receive a particular word from the King, or a particular news item. (Sometimes the local Agent was able to guide them in this, either by warning them that speaking to certain fellow-citizens would do more harm than good, or by informing them that certain fellow-citizens were more ready, than the Resisters might have thought, to receive what Headquarters had to say.)

Secondly, there was an emphasis on using *printed matter*. This consisted of ‘underground’ newspapers that were secretly produced whenever there was something to report: a broadcast by the King (or one of his close colleagues) or a significant news item.

Once again, the Resisters knew that they dared not be careless in the passing-around of their literature. Nevertheless, it was soon reaching a surprising number of people.

Almost all Resisters seemed to have got involved, one way or another, in both these aspects of keeping ‘Headquarters Truth’ flowing freely. They knew that it was incumbent upon them to pass on, by word of mouth, any encouragements or warnings from the King that they had personally heard, and any information that was available about progress in the struggle against the Enemy. At the same time, almost everybody in the Resistance contributed to the passing on of the underground newspapers. Like ordinary conversation, it was something most people could do. (In this connection, there are plenty of intriguing stories about old ladies with shopping bags full of illegal newspapers, and boys and girls doing delivery work on their bicycles!)

All in all, the passing on of ‘news and views’ from across the North Sea – by word-of-mouth, and by the secret handing out of literature – was a prominent feature of the ‘Care-Work’ of the Resistance. The Norwegian ‘Replacement Army’ kept “Headquarters’ Truth” flowing freely, in spite of all the efforts to put a stranglehold upon it!

I believe that Jesus is now calling each of us (the ‘soldiers’ of His ‘Replacement Army’) to be personally, and wholeheartedly, committed to keeping His “Headquarters Truth” flowing. I believe He is calling us to do it through the simple but effective means used by the Norwegian Resistance: ordinary conversation – backed-up, from time to time, by Christian literature.

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The fact is, of course, that Jesus has always wanted every Christian to be involved in passing on His Truth. Firstly, He has wanted us all to play a part in passing on His *words* – His *teachings*. In Matthew 10: 26-27, Jesus says to His disciples: “Do not be afraid. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.” The word translated ‘proclaim’ is ‘kerusso’, which is the Greek word describing the work of a herald in ancient times. Now, a herald was someone who passed on the words of a king to the people of his land. So Jesus was simply saying: “What you have heard from me – the King of Kings – I want you to pass on to your fellow-men.”

Although, Jesus was asking His followers to proclaim His Truth “from the roofs”, He knew that there would be times and seasons when a bit of caution would be advisable. In the very same passage in Matthew 10, He has already warned: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves.” (v 16). Not long before making that comment, He had said the same thing in a slightly different way: “Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matt. 7:6). Jesus, then, does not advise us to “throw caution to the winds” in spreading-the-word in a hostile society. Nevertheless, in Matthew 10:26-27, He does ask for fearlessness, for boldness. The Resisters (including the old ladies and the children!) certainly had fearlessness and boldness, even though it was edged with caution when extreme danger was around. I believe that we ‘Christian Resisters’ are called to be the same.

Incidentally, the Apostle Paul often indicates that ‘ordinary’ followers of Jesus are to undertake the task of bringing God’s Light and Truth before their fellow citizens. In Philippians 2:15-16, for instance, he puts it this way: “Shine like stars in the universe, *as you hold out the Word of Life.*”

While I have been telling you about the Norwegian Resisters, I have kept stressing that they didn’t only pass on what their King was *saying*, but also what he was *doing*. It wasn’t only the *advice* of Allied Headquarters that the citizens of Norway needed to hear, but also their *achievements*. So it must be with us. Somehow, we must convey not only *the* views our King is expressing, but also *the news* of what He is doing.

In Mark 5: 1-20, we read of a man, with a huge number of problems, whose life Jesus sorted out. Jesus’ parting words to him were these: “Go home to your family, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.” (v.19). The man went off, but he didn’t limit his ‘testimony’ to his immediate relatives. Verse 20 says that he spread the news throughout ten cities! There are regular references, in each of the Gospels, to men and women who gave witness to what Jesus had done in their own personal experience.

The last thing Jesus said, before ascending into Heaven, was this: “You shall be my witnesses”. (Acts 1:8) He then added that this should happen everywhere (“to the ends of the earth”). His final action, then – immediately prior to leaving this world – was to say, to His followers, words to this effect: “*Wherever you are, it’s going to be your job to keep the news flowing-out to your fellow citizens – the news of significant things that I have been doing, in this world where there is so much darkness and sorrow*”.

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There it is then. It has *always* been the task of ‘rank and file’ soldiers-of-Christ to be involved in passing-on what the King has said, and news of what He has been doing. Through the ages,

however, far too many of us (not all, but far too many) have left the job to a few crack troops – to professionals or to enthusiasts. That won't work any more. The old channels of Christian Truth are going to be progressively closed down. The days of *public* freedom-of-speech are numbered, for the time being anyway, if not for good. Like the Norwegians in the 1940s, we are going to have to depend on ordinary conversation, supplemented by the appropriate passing-around of Christian Literature.

By the way, I do not think we can delay getting involved in this until the stranglehold on public proclamation is complete. Already there are far too many of our fellow-citizens who know nothing of what our King is trying to say to His World, or of what He is doing in the World. The passing-on of Word and Witness is needed now. *For those of us who have become recruits in Christ's Replacement Army, "Keeping Headquarters Truth Flowing Freely" is an immediate call on our service for Jesus. It is an essential aspect of our "Cross-My-Path Care"*.

In the next chapter we shall examine, more closely, what exactly is involved in this "Headquarters Truth" that we are supposed to be passing on.

CHAPTER 19: WHAT EXACTLY IS COVERED BY THIS TERM "HEADQUARTERS' TRUTH"?

In the previous chapter, I quoted Paul's exhortation to the 'ordinary' Christians in the town of Philippi: "Shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the Word of Life." (Phil. 2:15-16). I was suggesting that, as the spiritual darkness deepens in Western Society, these words should be one of the key guidelines for those of us who are beginning to recognise ourselves as Christ's 'Resisters'. I think it is important, therefore, to have some kind of definition of what is meant by the phrase "The Word of Life". What, exactly, is involved in our "Headquarters' Truth"? What precise 'message' are we supposed to be passing on to our fellow citizens in this World?

As I see it, there are actually *several* crucial messages-to-mankind, from the King of Kings, in the writings we find in the New Testament – several separate strands in the Truth that comes from 'Divine Headquarters'. Each one of these 'messages' is important, and, one way or another, society needs to hear them all. Let me explain to you what I mean. Once again, the Norwegian 'parable' contains a helpful analogy.....

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A few years ago, I was able to pay a visit to the inspirational "Museum of the Resistance" in the very centre of Oslo. On display, there were quite a few copies of the 'underground' newspapers which Resisters, of every age and type, had risked their lives to distribute. I looked at those newspapers with great interest (aided by the fact that English translations were supplied for everything!) As I read, I began to realise the variety of topics that King Haakon,

and his fellow-broadcasters, had covered in those forbidden radio-broadcasts that the newspapers reported – the wide-ranging advice that came from Allied Headquarters to the citizens of Norway.

In the first place, the King of Norway spoke WORDS OF CARE AND CONCERN. It comes over very clearly that his highest priority was the welfare of the Norwegian People. Haakon, originally a member of the Danish Royal Family, had arrived in Norway in 1909, having been invited to become the first king of the country, when it gained independence from Sweden after a very lengthy period. All through the thirty-or-so years he had been among them as their monarch, he had shown great affection for the Norwegians, and was recognised as having worked tirelessly on their behalf. He had gone into exile solely because he felt that this “working for the people” would have been severely limited, if he had remained under the ever-watchful eyes of the occupying Nazi regime. Through his broadcasts, however, he assured his hearers that the love he had had for them, when he was actually with them, was as strong as ever. He also promised that his wholehearted working-on-their-behalf would continue unabated.

This did, in fact, work out pretty well in practice. As we have already seen, when anyone in Norway needed to be rescued from a tricky situation, Allied Headquarters was in a very good position to offer assistance. When medical supplies, or foreign money, or other resources, were in short supply in a specific situation, they could be parachuted in. Allied HQ was able to respond to a great many of the cries-for-help that came its way.

One of the themes, then, that comes over from the King of Norway’s radio broadcasts – reported in the underground newspapers (and presumably, also, in the conversations of the Resisters) – was that Haakon really cared about those who were victims of the Occupying Forces, and, given any real opportunity, was more than willing to help them.

Similarly, one of the themes that comes across from the New Testament (and should, therefore, appear in our literature, and in our conversations with those we encounter) is that the King of

Kings really cares about people on Earth who are victims of the ‘forces of evil’, and, like the King of Norway, is more than willing to help them. The New Testament shows that, when Jesus lived on the Earth, for thirty-or-so years, He constantly showed love, and care, and concern, for the people among whom He moved. However, the New Testament then goes on to explain: “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Consequently, the New Testament message is that that is how He still feels and acts. This makes me believe that *one* strand in the “Word of Life” that we are to ‘hold out’ to our fellow-citizens on Earth is this: “*Jesus loves you, and dearly wants to bless you, if you give Him half a chance.*”

I think it possible that some Christians will say: “Jesus can’t help you if you are not a believer.” I would certainly agree that He can’t help you *fully* if you are not a believer – just as a father can’t help a child, fully, if the child doesn’t really trust him, or co-operate all the way. However, during His ‘earthly ministry’, Jesus never insisted that people were committed to Him before He helped them in some significant way. In fact, it was the help that Jesus gave that often led, afterwards, to their acknowledging Him as Lord. I definitely think it is worth saying, to unbelievers who are in difficult circumstances, something like this: “You should earnestly try to see what God will do when you ask Him.” Quite a number of people will, no doubt, treat such a suggestion with scorn – but it is amazing how many folks have begun their Christian lives by crying out: “God! If you happen to exist, do something for me now!”

For the last few paragraphs, I have been talking about “Words of Care and Concern”, but I noticed too, when I was looking at the underground newspapers, that the King of Norway also spoke what I would call WORDS OF ADVICE-FOR-LIVING. He constantly reminded Norwegians that Nazi ways-of-living were based on false philosophies, and that the ‘old ways’, which had been honoured under his kingship, were the ways that actually worked best for Norwegian people. He commented on some of the dilemmas that might face individuals, and gave his views on how they might be handled.

I believe that all human beings need to hear *God’s* advice-for-

living. Jesus put it this way: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”. (Matt. 4:4.) He who created us is the One who understands what works best for human life – so both the Old and New Testaments are well ‘peppered’ with good advice for every human being, on all sorts of subjects.

Let me give you just one example of such advice. When Mavis and I got married, my father-in-law drew our attention to a single verse of Scripture: “Let not the sun go down on your wrath.” (Eph. 4:26 AV.) On the basis of that, we have never gone to sleep with any kind of annoyance-with-one-another left between us, and we believe that, over the years, that has made a large contribution to our marriage. *People in general (not just Christians) need to hear that kind of biblical advice.*

There is, of course, much advice in the Scriptures that only applies to believers, but there is also plenty of wise counsel that we could be passing on more widely, when it is appropriate. As the Norwegian Resisters counteracted Nazi philosophy by passing on the philosophy that came from their King and his close colleagues, so we to must counteract the many unhelpful philosophies of this world with the wholesome advice-for-living which is scattered through the Bible. The ‘Militant Secularism’ lobby will increasingly be trying to prevent the Bible having any *public* influence in our nations, so let us make sure that the Word of God continues to have influence through *private* conversation!

In his broadcasts, the King of Norway spoke words of loving concern, and words of practical advice-for-living, but he also spoke WORDS OF WARNING. He warned his hearers of how dangerous it was to collaborate with the Enemy. Superficially, it might seem that siding with the occupying forces would make life easier for you and your family, but, in point of fact, the Enemy had no personal interest in you or your loved ones, and could abandon you when it suited them. (This is what a lot of collaborators, all over Europe, found to their cost.) Furthermore, the King warned that collaboration would have long-term consequences. When the war was over, and Hitler had been defeated, there would be a time

of judgement, and those who had been aligned with the Enemy could not expect to share in the new post-war Norway that was on its way.

The King of Kings, and others who contributed to the New Testament, make exactly the same points. First of all, they remind us that going along with ‘the ways of the world’ is not as satisfying as it might at first seem. This is certainly what Jesus was getting at, when He said to ‘the Woman at the Well’: “Everyone who drinks *this* water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks *the water I give him* will never thirst.” (John 4:13-14.) The Apostles, for their part, admit that walking in ways that are contrary to God’s ways may well be enjoyable for a period, but they warn that, in the experience of many people, it eventually leads to bitterness and regret. For example, the Writer to the Hebrews talks about “the pleasures of sin *for a season*” (Heb. 11:25 AV), and Paul asks (Romans 6:21): “What benefit did you reap, at that time, from the things you are now ashamed of? (In other words: “Even when you were *not* a believer, you found your indulgences turned out to be a disappointment!”) The Bible, like the Norwegian underground newspapers, warns that ‘collaborating with the Enemy’, all too often, has a sting in its tail!

Similarly, the King of Norway’s other warning – that there would be a time of judgement at the end of hostilities – is strongly echoed in the New Testament. In Matthew 12:36, we find recorded this solemn statement of Jesus: “I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement.” Look up any concordance and you will find that the Gospels, and the rest of the New Testament writings, make frequent references to ‘judgement’, and to the personal giving of an ‘account’ of how one has led one’s life. Jesus and the Apostles also made it clear that failure in the final judgement would lead to exclusion from life in the “New Heaven and New Earth” of the future. Once again, there are countless such references, but, this time, we shall let the Apostle Paul sum up this aspect of biblical teaching. Writing to the Galatians (Gal 5:19-21) he gives a long list of lifestyles that are at odds with the ways of God, and he ends with these words: “I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

The King of Norway issued warnings about being aligned with the Enemy rather than being aligned with himself and the Allied cause – warnings for the duration of the war, and warnings about what would happen after the war. These warnings were a part of what was passed on to the population in general, in the underground newspapers, and in the conversations of the Resisters. *To be fair to our fellow-citizens on Earth, we Christians need to pass on similar warnings to them, with regard to both life itself, and to what happens after life.*

If all that sounds rather negative to some of my readers, I should point out that the fourth ‘strand’ in the King of Norway’s broadcasts was WORDS OF INVITATION. At the same time as issuing warnings, he always invited Norwegians, even in the midst of the hardships brought about by the Occupation, to commit themselves wholeheartedly to himself and his cause. The same was true of Jesus. Intertwined with his warnings of the consequences, for time and for eternity, of living independently of Himself, there were warm-hearted invitations to link up with Him; e.g. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened. Take my yoke upon you.” (Matt. 11:28-29.) “One thing you lack...Come, follow me” (Mark 10:21.) “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37.)

There is one significant difference between the words-of-invitation, issued by the King of Kings, and those issued by the King of Norway. *The invitation that comes from Jesus carries a generous offer of forgiveness.* Jesus says that it makes no difference to Him how much we have collaborated with the Enemy in the past – how sinful we have been – provided we have reached the stage where we are genuinely repentant about that, and want nothing else than being firmly on His side from now on. Because He can see into our hearts (see Matthew 12:25, Mark 2:8, Luke 6:8 and John 2:25) He knows whether our repentance is sincere or not.

I can well understand that because neither King Haakon, nor his special agents, could look into men’s hearts, they were extremely wary about admitting to the Resistance anyone who had been linked to the Nazis. The invitation of Christ is completely different, not because the sins of men and women don’t matter, but because

the New Testament is chock-full of references to the mystical but glorious truth that Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the World”. Jesus died on the cross so that anyone who has sinned might be forgiven. No matter how awful people’s records have been, if they are willing to link up with the King of Kings, they can do so! *We Christian Resisters must pass on Christ’s invitation, along with its strong emphasis on repentance (‘meaning business’ with God) and its equally strong offer of forgiveness-for-the-past.*

Finally, the broadcasts of the King of Norway, and his colleagues, which were so faithfully reported in the underground newspapers, and the conversations of the Resisters, contained WORDS OF HOPE.

Part of that hope lay in news items about successes for the King’s cause – either at individual level, or in a wider scenario. When someone in a village started telling others that she had received, from a neutral country, a post-card that had been sent by former neighbours who were Jewish, the whole village was cheered to know that some escapees had definitely succeeded in their bid for freedom. When news got through that Resisters had broken in to the Gestapo office that organised “Forced Labour” (i.e. the sending of Norwegian nationals to work in Germany) and stolen or destroyed all the paperwork – completely wrecking the scheme – lots of people throughout Norway were greatly encouraged. People benefit by knowing that bad situations can be changed for the better!

Hope was also stimulated by the confident assertion of the King, in many of his broadcasts, that he would return to his country one day; that all trace of oppression would be removed, and a new Norway – very different from the one they had been living in – would be established. The promise that there was something better ahead was a blessing to many as they struggled with their present situation – though, once again, not everyone believed that the final outcome would be so satisfactory.

We ‘Christian Resisters’ will need to pass on words of hope. If we ourselves have been ‘rescued’ or helped in some way, through Christ, and an opportunity arises to explain what happened, we

need to speak out. Whether everyone who hears our story believes us, or not, is irrelevant. Even if one person is given hope, or the story lodges (like a time-bomb!) in someone's thoughts, to do its work at a later stage in their lives, our 'testimony' will have been of value. The same is true if it is appropriate to tell someone else's story – especially something we have seen with our own eyes.

Similarly, we need to pass on Christ's promise that He is going to return one day, and set up his perfect Kingdom – his promise that History will have a glorious ending, as a New Heaven and a New Earth are ushered in. Of course there will be many scoffers, but let us go on declaring: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the Coming of the Lord". If *we* believe it, the faltering expectations of others will be strengthened.

* * * * *

Words of Care and Concern; Words of Advice-for-Living; Words of Warning; Words of Invitation and Forgiveness; Words of Hope – *that*, I believe, is "Headquarters' Truth"; *that* is the full range of the "Word-of-Life" that we are to "hold out" to others.

I have to admit, however, that this concept (of God depending on each of us to pass on that wide range of 'Headquarters' Truth) may have raised some awkward questions in the minds of some of you. In Chapter 20 I shall deal with these questions – after which we will be free to look, much more briefly, at the two remaining 'areas of service'.

CHAPTER 20: TWO AWKWARD QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR AREA- OF-SERVICE

At the end of the previous chapter, I described 'Headquarters Truth' (which I claimed every one of us of us ought to be passing on) in this wide-ranging way: "Words of Care and Concern; Words of Advice-for-Living; Words of Warning; Words of Invitation and Forgiveness; Words of Hope".

I can well imagine, however, that some of you, modestly considering yourselves to be ordinary, 'rank-and-file', Christians, will think that the task of passing on that whole package is beyond you. "This is a job for specialists," you will argue, "for preachers and teachers and theologians, but not for us." Some of you are bound to want to put this awkward question to me: "*Do you seriously believe that all Christians are capable of fulfilling this very challenging area-of-service*"?

The beginning of my answer to that question is to point out that the Lord is not asking you to give sermons, or to write intellectual articles, or to engage in academic discussion (if that is not your 'thing'). He is only saying that, if it occurs to you that something you have read or heard, from the Bible, is relevant in a situation, you should say so. If it occurs to you that an example of God's touch on your own life, or on the life of someone you know about, is appropriate in a certain set of circumstances, you shouldn't keep it a secret. If you know of a book, or a pamphlet, or an article, which may be of help to someone else – believer or unbeliever – you should give away a copy, or lend it, or recommend it.

Once you accept all that, there are a couple of 'biblical principles' that should encourage you in this area of "Holding-out the Word

of Life". The first such principle is this: *In God's purposes, there is a 'right time' for everything.*

Let me talk, just a little, about that principle. In the Greek in which the New Testament was written, there were two words for 'time'. One was 'chronos' (from which we get the word 'chronological'). That simply means time-in-a-general-sense. The other word was 'kairos', and that means '*the right time*', or '*the opportune moment*'. Look, for instance, at John 7, verse 6, where the brothers of the Lord are urging Him not to confine his ministry to the country areas, but to take it to Jerusalem: "Jesus told them, '*The right time for me has not yet come*'." Throughout the New Testament, that 'right time/opportune moment' word is frequently used.

With regard to the 'right time' principle, however, the most famous quotation comes from the Old Testament: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...a time to plant, and a time to uproot...a time to weep, and a time to laugh...a time to embrace, and a time to refrain...a time to keep, and a time to throw away...etc., etc." (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8.)

By the same token, there will be a right time for a 'word of hope', and a right time for a 'word of warning'; a right time for a 'word of care and concern', and a right time for a 'word of invitation and forgiveness'; a right time for a 'testimony' about the grace of God in your own life, or in the lives of others; a right time for passing on some good Christian literature (even something from the internet) that might be helpful to someone at a particular juncture in life.

Remember – you don't have to pour out 'the whole counsel of God' all at once, to every single person you meet! Over the entire span of your relationship with any one person there will probably be various opportunities for speaking appropriately. As Paul puts it, to two of the groups of believers to whom he wrote letters, "Make the most of every *opportunity*". (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5.) You don't need to be constantly spouting scripture, or recounting incidents of God-at-work. Simply be sensitive to those 'right times' that crop up.

The other 'biblical principle' that should encourage us to believe that every committed Christian is capable of passing-on something of 'Headquarters' Truth' is this: *Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will prompt us in what we are to say when the opportunities arise – and will even bring words of scripture to our remembrance, just when they are needed.* In Mark 13:11, the Lord teaches: "Do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit." In John 14:26 (as I mentioned in a previous chapter) He tells his disciples: "The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will...remind you of everything I have said to you."

Admittedly, in the passage from Mark, the Lord was specifically referring to the possibility that a believer might be forced to give an answer in a court of law. Nevertheless, I have noticed – both in the Scriptures, and in Christian experience – that the principle seems to apply to *any* challenging situation. (e.g. When a young man called Stephen got into a tricky argument, we are told that his opponents "could not stand up against...the Spirit by whom he spoke" – Acts 6:10.)

The first 'awkward question' I have been trying to answer, then, is this: "Can an 'ordinary' Christian (not particularly learned, not particularly articulate) really manage this 'passing-on of Headquarters' Truth?" My answer is: "Of course! All that is needed is an awareness that opportunities *will* arise from time to time, and a willingness to take these opportunities when they do arise – along with a readiness to listen for the promptings of the Spirit, to listen for His words being whispered in our ears. In our Norwegian parable, 'ordinary' resisters found that they could pass on their own particular 'Headquarters Truth', and we 'Christian Resisters' will find that we can do the same with ours.

* * * * *

That first question ("Can we do it?") would probably be asked by those of you who already see yourselves as recruits in Christ's Replacement Army, but the other 'awkward question' I want to deal

with is more likely to be asked by those who remain within the Institutional Church. It is a question about “Evangelism”.

At various points in this book, I have been suggesting that the ‘methods of evangelism’ that have traditionally been used, for quite a few centuries, are going to be increasingly banned, even in the countries that were once known as ‘Christian Countries’. In Chapters 19 and 20, I have been hinting that we will have to carry on our evangelism in the informal way that the Norwegian Resisters used to spread *their* King’s truth: simply by casual conversation, and by the printed word.

I know, however, that some of our fellow-Christians are going to be cynical about that. They are going to ask me (or ask *you*, my brother-recruit or my sister-recruit in the Replacement Army) “Do you seriously think that the odd mention of a bible verse, and the occasional anecdote about some incident of amazing grace, is going to win people for Christ – is going to gain new recruits for our King’s cause? Has your ‘casual-conversation-with-bits-of-Christian-literature-thrown-in’ really got any hope of succeeding as a method of evangelism?”

Once again, my answer to that is a resounding “Yes!” You only have to look at the story of the Chinese Church in the 20th Century to know that such a ‘method of evangelism’ has surprising potential.

Christians in China owe a tremendous debt to the Western missionaries who worked there in earlier centuries. Those intrepid men and women laid the foundations of everything that has happened since, and they deserve honourable recognition. It has to be said, however, that their methods of evangelism, and those adopted by native Chinese believers in the first half of the 20th Century, only saw a gradual – and comparatively tiny – increase in the numbers of believers in that land.

Then, after the Second World War, came the era of Communist domination. Christianity was officially banned, and no public evangelism of any description was permitted. The Christians were

only left with the “casual-conversation-with-bits-of-Christian-literature-thrown-in” method – the very method that some readers of my book are sure to describe as ‘pathetic’ and ‘totally inadequate’. Yet, what happened when the Church in China was ‘reduced’ to such ‘flimsy’ evangelism? The fact is that *over the years, millions were converted! Vast numbers were won for Christ!* In the light of what happened in China in the second half of the 20th Century, it is quite inappropriate to turn up your nose at informal, person-to-person, evangelism.

I believe that we can learn the same message from the accounts people give of their own spiritual pilgrimages – whether we get these accounts from reading biographies or autobiographies, or whether we get them simply in chatting with other believers. Actually, I think a great many of us would be reminded that “casual-conversation-with-bits-of-Christian-literature-thrown-in” is of huge value, if we just gave some consideration to our own, personal, spiritual-pilgrimage.

The situation is this: *Most people who become committed Christians do so as a result of a whole series of positive encounters with other believers.* They get a word of encouragement from one; a word of warning from another; a word of hope from someone else; occasionally a word of explanation from someone who knows what he or she is talking about. Sometimes, not a word is spoken: a tiny act of kindness, or a consistent example over a prolonged period, leaves an indelible mark. For those who are readers, books can play an important part. Sometimes books lie on our shelves for years, and then our attention is, somehow, drawn to them at what proves to be exactly the ‘right time’!

Of course, up to the present day, an ‘evangelistic occasion’ may well have played a part in the process of a person’s coming to a place of discipleship. However, for all but a very few, such an occasion tends to be only one encounter, among a whole series of encounters, that leads to final commitment. If ‘evangelistic occasions’ are banned, the process of ‘unbelievers’ being influenced by a succession of encounters with Christians will still go on.

To be very frank, I am convinced that the process would go on *much more effectively* if there were *no* opportunities for the mounting of ‘evangelistic occasions’! In my opinion most of us have, in the past, relied too much on special evangelistic outreaches, and have neglected our personal duties of ‘holding out the Word-of-Life’, and of being an example of ‘Cross-My-Path Care’. We have (wrongly) thought that the main influence on ‘non-Christians’ would be an evangelistic-occasion of one kind or another. We have not realised that the main influence, on those who are not Christians, is the impression (for better or for worse) that various individual Christians have made on them over the years.

If you think about it, an evangelistic-occasion is merely a ‘reaping’ of what others have sown – and it is not, by any means, the only way of reaping. Reaping can also be done person-to-person. I believe that, if the opportunity arises, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we *all* have the potential for it – though I would admit that some Christians may have more of a ‘gift’ for reaping than others. (Let us not forget, either, that for some people – as it was with the Apostle Paul – the reaping-occasion is a private encounter, with the Lord alone. No other human-being is involved.)

In John 4:38, Jesus talks to his disciples about ‘reaping’: “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.” In other words, *‘reaping’ is a comparatively easy task, provided the sowing, and the watering, and the weeding, and the fertilising, has been done.* If each of us is prepared to pass on whatever piece of “Headquarters Truth” is appropriate at the time, harvests *will* be reaped – as the Chinese Church, under the harshest of conditions, found to their delight.

* * * * *

What with their “Cross-My-Path Care”, and their “Keeping Headquarters-Truth Flowing Freely”, the King of Norway’s Replacement Army made a huge difference to countless lives in the difficult circumstances of the Nazi Occupation of his land. I

strongly believe that the King of Kings is calling those of us who are involved in His Replacement Army to engage in those same areas-of-service, in this World of His, where ‘forces of evil’ oppress so many, in one way or another.

Those two ‘areas of service’ were not, however, the sum total of King Haakon’s hopes and expectations for his ‘Resisters’ – and Jesus, too, has further hopes and expectations for us. Over the next few chapters, I shall, quite briefly, outline the remaining two areas-of-service the Norwegian King wanted (and got!), and show you the equivalent calls on our discipleship that are made by *our* King.

CHAPTER 21: OUR THIRD AREA-OF-SERVICE: THE “DEMOLISHING OF STRONGHOLDS”

The third ‘area-of-service’ that the King of Norway very much hoped for, from his Resisters, was SABOTAGE. *There is an important spiritual counterpart to the Resisters’ sabotage.* Before we go into that, however, let me explain, briefly, how the Resisters carried out this particular ‘area of service’.

There were numerous possible targets-for-sabotage in Occupied Norway: airfields from which Nazi bombers could harass convoys between Britain and Russia; factories producing aircraft parts, munitions, or even fish-oil – a by-product of which was the glycerine used in explosives; mines which produced iron-ore, or sulphur; oil-tanks containing fuel for submarines. (The u-boats themselves were too closely guarded, but without fuel they were useless! Blowing up torpedo stores had a similar effect!) Even breaking into the offices of the Gestapo or the agency-for-forced-labour, and stealing or destroying their paperwork, had its place in the story of sabotage.

Now, some of the sabotage in Norway was actually done by commandos, trained in Scotland, and parachuted in for the job, or landed by boat – rather than by the Resistance. The reason for this was that the Nazis imposed terrible reprisals on the local population if they had reason to believe that any locals were responsible for an act of sabotage, whereas the work of commandos, who wore military uniforms, was accepted as legitimate warfare. Nevertheless, a reasonable proportion of the sabotage was achieved by local Resisters, who took great care to make their particular operations look like ‘outside jobs’. Furthermore, very few of the commando sorties were accomplished without a huge amount of assistance from local Resisters. *Directly, or indirectly, the Resisters*

made quite a contribution to the destruction of installations used for the Enemy's oppressive purposes.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth, makes an interesting observation: “The weapons we fight with...have divine power to *demolish strongholds*.” (2nd Cor. 10:4.) (The King James Version – the ‘Authorised Version’ – puts it this way: “The weapons of our warfare are...mighty, through God, to the *pulling down of strongholds*.”) I’ll say more, before the end of this chapter about “the weapons of our warfare”, but for the present, I want us to concentrate on the phrase “the demolishing – the pulling down – of strongholds. *There is a kind of ‘sabotage’ that believers are supposed to engage in!*

The Old Testament prophets spoke out pretty strongly on this theme. Frequently they pointed out that, when negative aspects developed in society, it was up to believers to work for their removal, their demolition, their pulling-down. Isaiah, for instance, had started off his life of prophecy by asking God’s people simply to call attention to oppression: “Seek justice; rebuke the oppressor” (Isa 1:17 – see the NIV’s footnote.) As the years passed, however, he ‘upped the ante’, and urged believers to be pro-active in getting rid of oppressive features in their midst. At a time when God’s people were boasting about the fact that they were very diligent about the religious practice of fasting, Isaiah reported the Lord as saying: “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...and break every yoke...If you *do away with the yoke of oppression*...then your light will rise in the darkness.” (Isa. 58:6, 9-10.) This word from the Lord seems to have had little immediate response, because in the very next chapter we read: “The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no-one – He was appalled that there was no-one to intervene.” (Isa. 59:15-16.)

Many of the other prophets make the same point. Jeremiah, for instance, passes on God’s commendation for the work done by King Josiah: “*He defended the cause of the poor and needy.... Is that not what it means to know me?*” declares the Lord.” (Jer. 22:16.) In other words, God is saying that one of the ‘signs’ that

people know God will be their willingness to fight oppression! The prophet Ezekiel also reports the Heavenly Father’s ‘frustration’ that believers don’t seem to realise this: “The people of the land oppress the poor and needy, and ill-treat the alien, denying them justice. I looked for a man among them who would... stand before me in the gap, on behalf of the land...but I found none.” (Ezek. 22:29-30.)

The Apostle John once said of Jesus: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to *destroy* the Devil’s work.” (1 John 3:8.) I’m sure, from everything else John wrote, that he didn’t mean that Christ’s *sole* purpose was destruction – but he is reminding us that the demolition-of-evil is a facet of the divine purposes. It shouldn’t surprise us, therefore, if the “pulling-down of strongholds” is one aspect of what Jesus is looking for from his followers.

Here in Britain, the century that followed the revival in which God used John Wesley so powerfully, was filled with this kind of activity on the part of evangelical Christians. Lord Shaftesbury, and his fellow-believers in the influential ‘Clapham Set’, worked tirelessly to rid the country, through parliament, of the downside of the Industrial Revolution: slum housing, child labour, unrealistic wages, unrealistic working hours. William Wilberforce, and his supporters – such as ‘Amazing Grace’ writer John Newton – struggled to get politicians to realise (which they eventually did) that the Slave Trade, which was so prevalent in areas of British influence, ought to be abolished. In the 19th Century, one very definite aspect of evangelical Christianity was the “pulling down of strongholds” – a working towards the destruction of unjust and oppressive features which had developed in our society.

When I was a young man, seeking to serve God in the ‘evangelical wing’ of the Church, this particular aspect of Christian Service seemed, sadly, to be down-played in the circles in which I moved. Through much of the 20th Century, it was a feature that was largely confined to the ‘liberal wing’ of the Church. Towards the end of the 20th Century, some evangelicals, at least, seemed to get back to realising that working for justice, or for an end to oppression of various kinds, or for a reduction in the misuse of our God-given resources, are all genuine segments of the Christian life.

Certainly, just as the ‘demolishing of strongholds’ constituted one aspect of the work of the ‘Replacement Army’ of the King of Norway, so it must also constitute one aspect of the work of the Replacement Army of the King of Kings.

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Having said that, there are three comments I want to make about “Demolishing Strongholds”, as an area-of-service for the Replacement Army. *In the first place, I think that this is an area where most Christian people are likely to be involved indirectly, rather than directly.* That was the case with any sabotage that the Norwegian Resistance actually undertook. There were a few Resisters who had the know-how, and the personality traits, to carry out the front-line attacks, and a great many more background helpers of one kind or another. Not all of us are cut out to lobby parliament, or to mount campaigns directed against specific evils or injustices. Some of us have that talent, but by no means every one of us. However, the rest of us can support the work that is being done. Not only can we pray for it, or assist it financially if that is necessary, but we can also write to our local member-of-parliament – often along guidelines provided by someone who fully understands the situation – and we can sign petitions. (Incidentally, as we saw in Chapter 6, in the secular anti-Christian climate of many Western countries nowadays, high-profile Christian schemes for social betterment are being greatly curtailed, allegedly in case they ‘infect’ anyone with ‘dangerous religious myths’. Consequently, petitions, letters to MPs, and prayers for those doing negotiation, are soon going to be the main ways we can do our Christian ‘sabotage’.)

That brings me to my second comment. *We need to remember Paul’s warning that, though “the weapons we fight with...have divine power to demolish strongholds”, nevertheless, they are “not the weapons of the World.”* (2 Cor. 10:4.) As the Authorised Version puts it: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal”. Now, you may argue that approaches like letters to MPs, and petitions, and negotiations, are what ‘the World’ is doing in all the democracies; but I suggest that what Paul is getting at is that we should avoid

methods that are motivated by ungodly attitudes such as a reliance on violence, or a policy of ‘the end justifies the means’.

Both Old and New Testaments are against achieving spiritual goals by violence. Note the strong words of Psalm 11.5: “The Lord examines the righteous, but...those who love violence His soul hates.” In the context of the pursuit of justice, Isaiah says: “No-one pleads his case with integrity...acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood.” (Isa. 59: 4,6,7.) When two of Jesus’ disciples suggested ‘calling down fire’ on villages that hadn’t welcomed them, the Lord firmly rebuked them! (See Luke 9:52-55.) In the light of all this, I cannot myself see any justification, for instance, for committed Christians blowing up abortion clinics, or murdering doctors engaged in abortion. They have to have other ways of making their point.

The same is true of “the end justifies the means”. Paul teaches: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody ... Overcome evil *with good*.” (Romans 12: 17, 21.) Peter sounds out the same warning: “Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult.” (1st Pet. 3:9.) No ‘carnal’ weapons, then, as we engage in ‘spiritual sabotage’! We must not automatically use the methods that unbelievers might employ, when we go about our necessary ‘demolishing of strongholds’.

Thirdly, it is essential, if we are working towards the eradication of what has been labelled an evil, or an injustice, that we make absolutely sure that the cause really is a good one. Norwegian Resisters who were engaged in sabotage got a rude awakening when they discovered that their blowing-up of fish-oil factories was having a detrimental effect on the physical health of the nation! It was true that fish-oil could supply the Nazis with glycerine for explosives – but it also supplied vitamins that, hitherto, had helped the population to stay healthy! Just as we should weigh prophecy carefully, we need to weigh, just as carefully, proposals for changes-in-society that we are being enthusiastically urged to support. With the best possible intentions, well-meaning Christians have, in the past, made what proved to be errors of judgement.

A good example of this is the total prohibition of alcohol in certain countries – often promoted by earnest Christians. Prohibition in the United States, from 1920 to 1933, is the most famous case in point, and that is the one I am going to mention briefly. However, just for the record, let me remind you that the same experiment has been tried in other countries – including Norway (1919-1927). There is no doubt that over-indulgence in alcohol is always a huge problem – medically, socially (breaking up families), and economically (work-hours lost). As the First World War was drawing to a close, committed Christians (and others), in America, urged the total demolition of the trade in alcohol, and, as from January 16th 1920, its manufacture, distribution, sale and consumption were unequivocally banned. At first, crime rates were down, and the economy boomed, but the rot set in quite quickly. Illegal establishments for the sale of alcohol were set up, and these ‘speakeasies’, where customers had to whisper a password to get in, were soon more numerous than the previous legal selling-places had been. Early on, too, gangsters got in on the act, and crime soared. Some people distilled their own home-made ‘moonshine’, with disastrous effects on their health. In due course, the United States Government had to re-instate the drinks trade. Its total abolition had actually led to more difficulties than its original existence had caused. The problem was very real, but they needed to look for other ways of tackling it!

Of course, people have to conduct experiments, and learn from their mistakes – but more careful (and prayerful) thought about the possible consequences of this particular piece of well-intentioned ‘sabotage’ might have avoided a great deal of trouble. There are quite a few warnings in the old book of Proverbs that we still do well to listen to, such as: “A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.” (Pr. 14:15.) “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.” (Pr. 19:2.)

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unjust features in society should not, however, blind us to the fact that this is an area-of-service soldiers of the Replacement Army will need to be interested in. Some of us may find ourselves directly involved with a particular issue, perhaps on a long-term basis. Most of us are more likely to find ourselves indirectly involved, probably on an occasional basis. None of us should ever forget, though, that the “demolishing of strongholds” – of injustice, and oppression, and environmental carelessness, the world over – is a worthy, and not-to-be-neglected, part of Christian discipleship. If, as we noted earlier, “the Son of God appeared to destroy the Devil’s work” (1 John 3:8.), then surely the Body-of-Christ, on Earth today, must have a similar aim?

The need for caution about trying to get rid of undesirable and

CHAPTER 22: A FOURTH AREA-OF-SERVICE: THE SENDING OF MESSAGES TO HEADQUARTERS (ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS)

One of the contributions that the Allied High Command looked for (very eagerly) was the receiving of radio-messages, from Resisters all over Europe, about anything happening in Enemy-occupied territory, that HQ might be able to do something about. Every time there was a change in the situation anywhere under Nazi control (such as troop movements, or the construction of new military installations) High Command wanted to know about it, *in case it was an opportunity for action on their part*.

Historians tend to describe this aspect of the struggle against Hitler as “The Intelligence Work of the Resistance”, or even as “Resistance Espionage”. However, those high-sounding terms suggest activities that can only be undertaken by a select few (i.e. people who have been properly trained as ‘spies’), whereas a huge number of the Resisters – including some of the children – were involved in the noting, and passing-on, of relevant facts to Headquarters. Consequently, I prefer to call this feature of their lifestyle by the simpler title of “The Resistance Messaging Service”.

Two paragraphs ago, I used the phrases “*in case it was an opportunity for action*”, and “that HQ *might* be able to do something about”. Obviously, I am suggesting that there was an element of doubt about whether the High Command would always respond to the messages the Resisters sent. I have to admit that they didn’t always respond. From time to time, they failed completely to act upon what they had been told. Sometimes, they responded to the Resisters’ messages, but made mistakes – occasionally, dreadful

mistakes! (The fact is that even the Headquarters of the Allies, nerve-centre of the entire operation to counteract Hitler, was staffed by fallible human-beings who didn't always get everything right!)

Having said that, however, I must emphasise that, most of the time, Allied High Command did respond effectively to the messages that the Resisters sent. In fact, Headquarters sometimes had a clearer idea than the Resisters of what was for the best! There were occasions when HQ realised that there were more important priorities, more satisfactory ways of dealing with a situation, more realistic timetables, than those the Resisters had in mind. Nevertheless, the over-all picture I get is that the Resistance was able to rely on an appropriate response to the messages it sent.

Let me give you a couple of famous examples – specifically from the Norwegian scene – of how Headquarters reacted very effectively to the Resistance 'Messaging Service'. The first incident happened in the spring of 1941. Various Resisters, whose homes were scattered along a stretch of the coastline, began to notice a powerful enemy naval-craft out to sea. This triggered off a series of almost-hourly reports on the ship's movements. The vessel was, in fact, the dreaded Nazi battleship "Bismarck", which was being sent on an intentionally unpredictable course, via the coast of Norway, towards the North Atlantic trade route – with the express purpose of sinking merchant ships that were bringing essential goods to the Allies from Canada and America. The messages from the Resisters enabled Allied HQ to pinpoint the battleship's position, and, before it got properly started on the reign-of-terror that had been planned for it, warships and aircraft were dispatched to it put out of action. "The Sinking of the Bismarck" was a much-needed boost to morale in the early stages of the war, and the vital contribution from Resisters, as well as the prompt response on the part of HQ, has always been recognized.

In late 1942, Resisters who worked at an installation in the province of Telemark, operated by the Norwegian Hydro-Electric Board, began to transmit, to Allied Headquarters in the UK, information about the lay-out of the plant where they were employed. This particular installation was being used by the Nazis

to produce 'heavy water' – essential in their attempt to develop an 'atomic bomb'. Eventually, HQ decided it had enough details for a daring attempt at sabotage, and a group of Allied commandos (all of Norwegian nationality) was dropped into the region by parachute. The extensive damage done on that occasion, coupled with some wise 'follow-up' work, caused the Nazis to abandon completely their atomic-bomb programme.

In both these situations the Allies were stimulated to intervene, and do something that was important *internationally* in the struggle against Hitler – all because of messages sent to HQ by Resisters. At the same time, Resisters were not hesitant to ask for help for local situations – situations where they were trying to support others, or even situations that involved themselves personally. If medical supplies were needed, or forged identity documents or maps were required, or weapons or explosives were important (as they were in certain conditions), you only had to report the fact, and, at an appropriate time, they would be parachuted in.

I could give scores of examples of the connection between the messages from Resisters and the response from Headquarters, but let me sum up the point I am making: *Allied High Command got its wish – a steady 'Messaging Service' from the Resisters. As a result, it was provoked to act decisively in many adverse situations, and to send much relevant help to people struggling because of the forces-of-occupation in their land.*

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One of the clear teachings of the Bible is that *our* 'High Command' wants a continuous 'Messaging Service' from Believers. Furthermore, there is a promise that, in response to such a 'Messaging Service' *our* High Command will be provoked to act decisively in the adverse situations that *we* report, and to send appropriate help to people struggling because of 'forces of evil' operating in our World.

Let me give you a brief selection of Scriptures that make this point. “Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you.” (Ps.50:15.) “Because he loves me (says the Lord) I will rescue him. I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him”. (Ps. 91:14-15.) “I know the plans I have for you (declares the Lord); plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. You will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” (Jeremiah 29:11-12.)

The words of Jesus: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?” (Matthew 7:11.) “Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray, and not give up.” (Luke 18:1.) “Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. (Luke 18:7-8.)

The Apostle Paul writes: “Pray...on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests...Be alert...and always keep on praying.” (Ephesians 6:18.) “Do not be anxious about anything, but in *everything*, by prayer and petition...present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6.) “I urge...that requests, prayers and intercession...be made for *everyone*...that we may lead peaceful and quiet lives, in all godliness and holiness.” (1st Timothy 2:1-2.) It seems that anything that diminishes the peace or the goodness of communities, or the peace and goodness of individuals, should be reported to Divine Headquarters, and intervention requested.

I don't think that I am being unreasonable in claiming that if Paul were speaking, now, to those of us who are soldiers of Christ's 'Replacement Army' he would say: “Do as the Resisters did. Report everything – great and small, personal and public – to your Heavenly High-Command. For Christ's 'Resisters' – just as it was for the Norwegian Resisters – this will be a vital 'area of service'.”

Mind you, Divine Headquarters may not always respond in the way we expect. I am sure that, as with the Second World War

situation, there will be quite a few occasions when *our* HQ will realise that there are more important priorities, more satisfactory ways of dealing with a situation, more realistic timetables, than those we have in mind. Unlike the Second World War situation, however, I don't think there will be any blunders, or 'dreadful mistakes', from our HQ. That is not the character-of-God that we find depicted in the Bible. I said earlier that the over-all picture I got was that those loyal to the Norwegian King were able to rely, most of the time, on an appropriate response to the messages it sent. From personal experience, and the experience of many others, I would say that this is *always* true for those loyal to the King of Kings.

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There is, of course, one significant difference between the messages that the Resisters sent, and those that Christians send. The messages the Resisters sent were important because they supplied Allied HQ with *information* that they wouldn't otherwise have had. Without the Resistance reports of where the “Bismarck” was lurking, HQ would have remained in comparative ignorance. Without Resistance reports about the lay-out of the atomic research station, the commandos sent by HQ would have had no idea how to proceed. *But we cannot say that our Headquarters needs information! We cannot possibly imagine that our High Command remains ignorant, or doesn't know how to proceed, until we report something in prayer!*

In fact, the teaching of the entire Bible is that the opposite is true! We are frequently told that the Divine High Command already has a complete over-all view of everything that is going on in this world. In Hebrews 4:13, for instance, we read: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered, and laid before His eyes....” (That same truth is echoed in many places; e.g. John 16:30; Acts 1:24; 1st John 3:20; Genesis 16:13; Job 34:21.) This leads many Christians to ask: “What, then, is the point in praying, if God already knows exactly what is going on? The 'Messaging Service' of the Resisters obviously had a very vital part to play in the struggle against oppression, but – even though the Bible seems

to urge us to have a similar ‘Messaging Service’ – of what use can it possibly be?”

Here is the answer I would give to those who are troubled by this serious dilemma: *Our God isn’t looking for INFORMATION, but He IS looking for INVITATION.* From the Bible, there comes across to me this remarkable truth: It is the nature of Almighty God to be very unwilling to intervene in human affairs, *unless He knows He is welcome – unless He is warmly invited!*

Jesus made this point, about his own actions, several times. It comes over particularly clearly in a message He gave to the Apostle John, to pass on to a group of believers in the ancient city of Laodicea: “Look! I stand at the door and knock. *If* anyone... opens the door, I will come in.” (Revelation 3:20.) In other words: “I don’t barge in to human affairs – but *if* I am invited, I will certainly respond.” The same outlook comes across in Jesus’ words to the paralysed man who was lying beside the pool of Bethesda: “Do you *want* to get well?” (John 5:6.) In other words: “I’m not going to help you, unless I am sure that that is what you really desire.”

To my mind, one of the most famous verses in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ carries the same message: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”. (Matt. 7:7.) Jesus is surely teaching: “Show your Heavenly Father that you have a strong desire for Him to act, and He will respond.” There is the definite implication that if we don’t ask, or don’t seek, or don’t knock, He is unlikely to intervene. (This is not because He is lukewarm about helping, but because His approach is that, normally, He gets involved in human affairs only when He is genuinely invited.)

I even think that Jesus was underlining this message when He said: “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven.” (Matt. 18:19.) Agreeing with someone else about a request to Divine Headquarters’ seems to make the invitation all the stronger. *All in all, in Jesus teaching, there is a very definite connection between getting help from God and wanting, inviting, asking.*

Let me point you to one final verse on this subject, this time from the Old Testament: “If my people...will humble themselves and pray....then will I hear from Heaven...and will heal their land”. (2nd Chronicles 7:14.) Of course, in words that I have missed out, that verse also stresses that there is no use praying if, at the same time, you are collaborating with the Enemy (i.e. engaged in sinful practices). For the present, however, I simply want to call your attention to the phrase “If you pray, *then* I will heal your land.”

I am not saying that God *never* acts unless His People pray. We are told, for instance, that “He is able to do *immeasurably more* than we ask.” (Ephesians 3:20.) Nevertheless, the general principle is clear: God wants to be invited. He wants to be sure that there is a real desire, in the hearts of at least some people, for His intervention in human situations. It is part of His unchangeable character that He normally acts only when He is asked to do so. Consequently, without prayer from our end, Almighty God – by His own nature – is limited in His freedom to act!

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Prayer has, of course, *always* been very much part of the traditional Church scene, down through the centuries. *However – just because the old order is changing in many respects – this is not something that we dare abandon.* As it was for the people of the King of Norway’s ‘Replacement Army, it is vital that those of us who make up Christ’s ‘Replacement Army’ constantly inform our Headquarters about what is going on in our lives, in our immediate surroundings, and in our World – and appeal for intervention and help.

We must pray on our own, as individuals. We must “agree” with others about petitions to the Lord that seem important. Sometimes, too, we must gather together to voice our requests corporately (as happened often among the first Christians e.g. Acts 1:14, 4:24, 12:5, 12:12, 21:5.)

For the Allied High Command, and the King of Norway, it was the *information* which they got that triggered-off the moves they made. For our Heavenly Father, and for Jesus our King, it is the *invitation* that comes to them, from the human side (if it is sincere and earnest) that elicits the divine response. Prayer is an area-of-service that will continue to be an essential part of the work of 'soldiers of Christ'. Christian men and women (and boys and girls) who are serving in the newness of the 'Replacement Army' of the King of Kings – Keep praying!

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That more-or-less concludes my coverage of the four 'areas of service' that King Haakon was looking for, from the soldiers of his 'Replacement Army' – with my parallel suggestions about areas-of-service that Jesus is likely to be looking for, from us, in the days that lie ahead.

Readers with a background in the Institutional Church (I imagine that means most readers) will have noticed that there has been very little mention of 'organisations' or 'programmes' or 'projects' – the kind of thing that has been absolutely central to 'church work' in the past. The fact is that, under the Nazi regime, there was not much scope for organised corporate activity. Furthermore, as public Christian activity becomes increasingly limited – and even prohibited – in so-called democratic countries, there will not be much scope for it in our future experience.

However, I would not be completely fair either to History, or to the New Testament, if I didn't admit that there were *some* projects and *some* organising, among both the Resisters, and the first Christians. The next chapter is something of a 'footnote' to this 'areas of service' section. It will discuss the place of humanly-organised activity *within* a lifestyle that is, otherwise, largely 'unstructured' and informal.

CHAPTER 23: A FOOTNOTE: THERE WILL STILL BE SOME OLD-STYLE 'PROJECTS' – AND SOME ORGANISING TO BE DONE!

Through the centuries there have been some truly wonderful Christian projects and organisations – for the alleviation of suffering, for the improvement of social conditions, and for the spreading of the Gospel. It would be understandable, therefore, if some of you were to ask if the kind of projects and organisations that we were used to, in Institutional Church days, are going to disappear altogether from our 'Replacement Army' lifestyle. Are we never going to be involved in another programme, mounted by believers? Are we 'Christian Resisters' never going to organise anything at a human level?

Even though you accept that people can be wonderfully helped – as they undoubtedly were in New Testament times – by informal relationships, and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, some of you may have nagging doubts as to whether it is right for the 'organisational' aspect to disappear completely from Christian Service.

I don't blame you. There are two good reasons why you may have these doubts. The first reason is that God has given human beings organisational talents, and some people possess them in great measure. In 1st Corinthians 12:28, there is a short list of God-given gifts that believers might use, and one of them is "the gift of administration". Surely it would be right, therefore, for us to expect that there will be a place for 'administration' (i.e. organisation) among us?

The other reason is that, though "Cross-My-Path Care" can work

wonders among those whose lives touch ours directly, it is difficult, with that approach, to realistically support those with whom we have no direct connection. This is particularly obvious in modern times, when the media bring us news of tragedies and disasters from every corner of the globe. We want to help, but unless we actually go in person (which, in some cases, might be right) it is difficult to do anything, unless some ‘channel of assistance’ has been organised (usually, though not always, something financial).

When I was reading accounts of the Norwegian Resisters in action, I noticed that, even though their work was usually organised at Allied Headquarters across the North Sea, and directed at local level by the ‘Sent-Over’ Agent, *there was still scope, within the master-plan, for individual Resisters to use their personal organising skills – and there were also some ‘channels of assistance’, to help them care for people-in-need with whom they had no immediate connection.* Reading through the New Testament, I noticed exactly the same set-up in the life of the Early Church!

I would like to take a bit of time to recount some relevant anecdotes from the Resistance story, and give some similar instances from the New Testament letters and the book of ‘Acts’. As we look at how both the 20th-Century Resisters and the 1st-Century Christians operated, we shall, I believe, become much clearer about where projects, and ‘initiatives’, and organising in general, will fit in to our future service.

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In the Resistance situation, for instance, the local Agent might approach you, and ask you to take a shot-down airman across a mountain pass that HQ had chosen, and deliver him to the home of an HQ-designated Resistance family who would be responsible for the next stage of his journey. The Agent might also supply identity papers, and warn of Nazi troop movements. However, he left it to *you* to work out when exactly to make the crossing, and by which of several routes through the pass. He also left you to decide some of the other details of the expedition (e.g. clothing and equipment).

Headquarters was responsible for every stage of the over-all plan, and for many of the details, but there were plenty of opportunities, within that, for individual Resisters to use their own talents.

The same principle can be seen in the activities of the first Christians. In an earlier chapter, I called your attention, in the Scriptures, to a time when the Holy Spirit came upon all the believers, leading – among other things – to their being “no needy person among them”. (Acts 4:31-34.) One of the aspects of that outflow-of-concern-for-others was a daily distribution of bread to widows. (No widows’ pensions in those days!) Unfortunately, with growing numbers involved, the distribution began to get out-of-hand. Now, the Apostles didn’t say “Let’s just trust the Spirit on this one”. They knew that, sometimes, the Spirit wants believers to do some organising. So they suggested that the whole group of Christians elect a team of seven men to be responsible for sorting everything out. (You can read all about it in Acts 6:1-6.) The Early Church operated on the basis that the Spirit should ‘mastermind’ everything that was done, but that there *was* a place for human planning within that. I feel sure that, even in the future form of Church that I am prophesying, the God-given gift of “administration” will not be squandered in God’s service.

I already know, from a number of years’ experience as a “soldier-in-waiting”, (trying to live the “Cross-My-Path Care” lifestyle by the Spirit’s guidance) that though the Spirit calls our attention to individuals who need special support, and shows us how particularly tricky situations are to be dealt with, He also gives us plenty of opportunity to use such organising skills as we possess. When you are attempting to support other people who find themselves in a challenging situation, there is often information to be unearthed, arrangements to be made, details to be worked out. I have never felt myself to be a mere ‘puppet’ in the Spirit’s hands – much more like an ‘apprentice’, to whom the Chief Craftsman delegates a certain amount, while being responsible for the over-all planning of what is being done. I am certain that, just as organising done by individuals was a recognizable feature of both the King of Norway’s ‘Replacement Army’, and of the Early Church, it will be a recognizable feature of Christ’s Replacement Army.

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Occasionally, even in the work of the Resisters (which, on the whole, had to be carried out ‘underground’) opportunities arose for organisation *on quite a large scale*. There were times when full-blown projects developed. Let me give you a couple of examples. When, for instance, it was announced that, throughout Norway, all boys and girls aged 10 to 18 were to be forced to join the Hitler-Youth Movement, a widespread scheme for letters-of-objection from parents, addressed to the Nazi-controlled Ministry of Education, was organised by Resisters in Oslo who worked at the central offices of the Lutheran Church. The Ministry of Education received 200,000 letters – a fantastic response, in a small country, even by today’s standards. Amazingly, the Nazis actually gave in to the pressure, and a great many Norwegian families had cause to be grateful for this nationwide Resistance initiative.

In the little book I mentioned in Chapter 10 (“We Die Alone” – the biography that started me off on my discovery of the Norwegian Resistance Parable), I read about an organisation, originally set up by two businessmen in the northern town of Tromsø, to collect money from Resistance people – money that could be given to the dependants of men who had been arrested or killed by the Nazis, or forced to flee the country. At its height, that organisation was distributing a weekly sum that was astounding for the 1940s. Sadly, the two businessmen ended up in a Concentration Camp in Germany for their efforts, and died there – but their scheme was an excellent project, and genuinely contributed to counteracting Nazi oppression in that part of Norway.

Projects to give financial aid were also part of the life of the Early Church. In Acts 11:27-30, for instance, we read about a scheme to help needy believers, when a time of famine was predicted. The project that receives most coverage in the New Testament, however, is the one – organised by the Apostle Paul – to get local church-groups all over South-East Europe to send financial help to poverty-stricken believers in far-off Judea. (See Romans 15:25-27; 1st Corinthians 16:1-4; and two full chapters of 2nd Corinthians: 8 and 9.)

Fellow soldiers of the Replacement Army! I am certain that, in what lies ahead for us, there will be a place, not only for organising skills to be used personally in our interaction with other individuals, but also for some organisations and projects and schemes of one kind or another – even if the time comes when these have to operate ‘underground’.

Schemes to help people-in-need, whom we *don’t* come across directly, are always going to be of value – especially, perhaps, the financial ones. Even as ‘soldiers-in-waiting’ Mavis and I have been glad of various Aid-Organisations (large and small, Christian and secular) that have given us the opportunity of supporting folks we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to support. I expect that Replacement Army people will make use of existing aid-schemes and/or be led into new ones.

I feel sure, too, that the organising of petitions, and letters-to-authority, will have their place in the lifestyle of those who live in ‘democracies’. Here in Britain, at any rate, members-of-parliament shake in their shoes if they get too many letters of opposition from their constituents! Especially when the situation eventually develops in which Christian organisations are no longer free to operate publicly, projects like the organising of petitions, and letters-to-authority, from believers, will be worthwhile channels of influence – particularly, perhaps, in the area of “the pulling down of strongholds” that we discussed earlier.

I know from experience that, even in a style of church-life that is (generally-speaking) “unstructured”, much blessing can be brought-about by an occasional bit of quite large-scale organisation. Two or three years ago, for instance, some Christian “soldiers-in-waiting”, in Ireland, organised a ten-day “Festival” to which people of like mind, from all over the world, were invited. The opportunities for fellowship, and for the exchange of experiences, were varied and imaginative, and everyone who was present, for all or part of the time, testified afterwards – in letters, e-mails and ‘blogs’ – to the positive benefits of having attended. Like many others, Mavis and I were grateful to those who had put in the hard work on this project. I feel sure that, from time to time over the years, there will be many

such gatherings among people. They will be invaluable – but they *will* require organisation!

All in all, as both our Parable and our Scriptures show us, organising and projects should each have a place in the otherwise “person-to-person” and “directed-from-beyond” lifestyle of the Replacement Army of the King of Kings.

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Having said all this, however, I want to emphasize strongly that, though there was certainly a place for organising, and for projects, in both the Resistance Movement and the Early Church, it was a *limited* place. *It was the exception rather than the rule.* The ‘rule’ – the major focus – among the Resisters in Norway, and among the first Christians, was “love-through informal relationships”, with the bulk of the organisation being done at ‘Headquarters’, and conveyed to the ‘grass roots’ by the ‘Sent-Over Agent’.

In the Institutional Church, as I have known it, the *opposite* has usually been the case! The “rule”, there, has been programmes and projects and organisations, and there often seems to be very little emphasis on “love through informal relationships”, or “Spirit-led Service”! I am not saying that ‘neighbourly care’ and ‘the prompting of the Spirit’ doesn’t happen, or that it is never mentioned – but my experience and observation of the Institutional Church is that, for a great many years, *Christian Service has been totally dominated by Church Programmes.*

That was one of the major factors that led Mavis and me to leave the Institutional Church. Our involvement in church activities had meant that our diaries were always absolutely full, and there was no opportunity to get involved with people in need, of one kind or another, who crossed our path through work, through social contacts, or because they lived in our locality. We felt like the Priest and the Levite on the Jericho Road – scurrying between Church activities, with no time to tend a very needy person by the way-

side. When we progressively gave-up the projects we were involved in, *in order to be more available to the Spirit, and to real people*, most fellow-Christians didn’t seem to understand! Unfortunately, in many churches, Commitment-to-Christ is all too often judged by how committed we are to the Church Programme, rather than how committed we are to Spirit-led Neighbour-Love!

I have come to the conclusion that when most Christians think about ‘blessing others’, it is almost exclusively in organisational terms. If their church has no particular programme running at the time, they feel useless. Many don’t seem to notice that there are scores of individuals, within their every-day scene, who would benefit, one way or another, by a relationship that is something more than just “passing the time of day”. I have observed quite a few Christians, over the years, who have had very needy people living next door to them, or very close-by, but who have been so taken up with their church’s programme that they haven’t had a moment to spare for those neighbours! (By the way, this ‘condemnation’ includes Mavis and me, at an earlier stage in our lives, before we realised how neglectful we were being.)

Now, if those church-programmes had been having a wonderful impact, such ‘neglect’ might have been excusable, but in most of the situations I am thinking about (including our own) many of the programmes were nothing special. Although a few of them were highly commendable, a great many of them turned out to be a disappointment, even to those who had initiated them. I realise, of course, that there has to be trial and error, but my over-all impression is that the vital ‘neighbour-love’ that Jesus wants has been pushed aside by an over-dose of well-intentioned, but largely ineffective (and occasionally very gimmicky) projects and schemes. Many active Christians are so involved in church programmes, that large numbers of truly needy people are missed.

As we have already seen, the Resistance gained a wonderful reputation for having a ‘net of care’ through which people round about them did not fall. As we have also seen, the Early Church also gained a wonderful reputation for having a successful ‘net of care’. I do not think the Modern Church has such a reputation.

If ‘outsiders’ are fair to the Institutional Church, they will see that there are bright splashes of genuine and effective care, here-and-there in the overall picture, and there are also individual pin-points of light. Nevertheless, generally speaking, even the most fair-minded person doesn’t say (can’t honestly say): “Well, one thing is certain about these Christians – they really love their neighbours, as Jesus commanded.”

There are, of course, two separate factors that explain why the Modern Church does not have this reputation. The first is that there is a proportion of people, on many church-membership lists, who are not really very committed to *any* form of Christian Service. However, there is also a proportion of people on most church-membership lists who are very committed to Christian Service. Why don’t those lovely people win the same kind of reputation for the Church as the Early Church had? I believe that it has been this pre-occupation with programmes – this obsession with organisations – that has deflected modern Christians from what should be their *major task*: Spirit-led, person-to-person love of neighbour, in every dimension of human need.

As I suggested at the end of the previous chapter, circumstances may eventually force that ‘major task’ on all Christians, whether they accept what I am saying or not! Governments all over the World are cracking down on Christian organisations and activities. This is not only happening in countries that have never been known as “Christian Countries”, but also – because of the rise of Secularism in the West – in those countries that *have* previously been called “Christian”. Whether believers like it or not, the place of openly-operating Christian organisations is going to be increasingly limited. Like the 20th-Century Chinese believers, sooner or later, apart from a few ‘underground’ projects, the unstructured and informal lifestyle I have been describing, over the last ten chapters, may be all we have left!

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covered a great deal. There is a danger of not being able “to see the wood for the trees” – a danger of missing the essence of what has been said, because of all the detail. Consequently, in the next chapter – the last in this ‘areas of service’ section – I shall make some suggestions on how we might best “keep things simple”, and maintain a clear focus for the somewhat different Christian lifestyle into which Jesus is leading us.

Looking back over the last ten chapters, I realise that I have

CHAPTER 24: A SIMPLE GUIDELINE FOR A CLEAR FOCUS IN CHRIST'S SERVICE

Over the years since I have started telling people that Mavis and I (and thousands of other enthusiastic Christians) are no longer involved in the Institutional Church and its programmes, one of the questions I have almost always been asked is this: “What on earth do you do with yourselves? How do you ‘fill in’ the time left by abandoning organised Christian Service?”

My response has been to try to give the people who pose these questions some kind of ‘potted’ version of the last ten chapters! I have attempted to show them that, in a needy world, there is any amount of useful work to be done, even if it is not being channelled through organised projects. I have tried to dispel the ridiculous idea that, because some believers are not involved in church programmes, they cannot possibly be doing anything of any consequence in the Lord’s service.

Surprisingly, some of those I have been answering in this way, have reacted along the following lines: “You folks are going to the other extreme! That is far too tall an order! That is one gigantic programme that you are taking on! It won’t be possible to keep-up such an extensive range of activity.”

Perhaps, having read the last ten chapters yourself, you agree with them. Perhaps it does, indeed, seem a huge and daunting ‘programme’. There are so many different types of people needing support – actual neighbours; people you meet at work or at leisure; even strangers who, somehow or other, cross your path. There are so many different levels at which that support could be given: practically, socially, economically, psychologically, and spiritually.

To make matters even more complicated, there are half-a-dozen aspects to the ‘spiritual care’ that we are called upon to offer! Then again, our care is not to be confined to the personal level. Attention needs to be given, also, to unhelpful trends and factors in society. Furthermore, everybody and everything you are concerned for has to be prayed about. Finally, to cap it all, in spite of your having consciously moved out of the ‘church programmes’ scene, you might even find yourself involved in doing some organising, or in the occasional project!

At first sight, it would appear, from what I have been saying over the last ten chapters, that the ‘soldier of the Replacement Army’ is charged with an enormous range of duties!

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I have to admit that, in the first year after we moved out of the ‘Institutional Church’ – in order, as we said, to have a ‘people-centred’ lifestyle, rather than a ‘programme-centred’ one – there was a stage when we were in danger of being discouraged.

Initially, we had been very *encouraged!* No sooner had we made the break from a ‘programme-centred’ lifestyle, than we became aware of a surprising number of folks, within our own immediate ‘orbit’, whose situations seemed to call out for more involvement on our part. We tried to make sure that we were not in any way imposing ourselves on anyone (interfering ‘do-gooders’ are a menace!) but, very soon, we found that we were forging links, of one kind or another, with an increasing number of people.

It wasn’t long, however, before we had an adverse reaction! We entered a period of feeling over-burdened – a period in which we began to think that a people-centred lifestyle was going to be too much for us! We were concerned about ourselves, because life was beginning to seem excessively demanding. We also felt guilty about a number of people with whom we might have had a stronger relationship, had we had more time.

Happily, this period of feeling over-burdened and guilty didn’t last very long, because there formed in our minds a simple guideline that brought us peace. I don’t even remember, now, exactly how the guideline came to us. Did it ‘come in a flash’? Did it dawn on us gradually? I can’t really recall. What I can say, however, is that it took any sense of stress, any unhealthy pressure, out of the living-for-others to which Jesus was calling us.

Here is our ‘guideline’: EACH DAY, DECIDE WHO THE PRIORITIES ARE FOR THAT PARTICULAR DAY – BUT BE OPEN TO CHANGES-OF-PLAN, SUGGESTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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Even though I can’t say *how* this ‘guideline’ came to us, I can explain *where* it came from. It arose directly from the words and example of Jesus. It arose from four ‘hints for Christian living’ that appear, at various points, in the Gospels. I believe that a very brief discussion of each of these ‘hints’ will help to show the value of approaching our Christian Service with this kind of attitude.....

First ‘Hint for Christian Living’: Live a Day at a Time

One very memorable statement, made by Jesus in the course of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, is this: “Do not worry about tomorrow... Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:34.) With these words, the Lord seems to be recommending “living a day at a time” to his followers. Even though this recommendation has been adopted by numerous ‘secular’ self-help gurus, we mustn’t forget that it is a genuine part of the teaching of Jesus.

Now, it is true that the Lord gives this teaching on one occasion only. (These words are not even reported in any of the other Gospels.) Nevertheless, I still think it is one of His important teachings, *because it is so fully backed-up by how He lived his whole life.* The entire lifestyle of Jesus epitomises “living a day at a time”. I firmly believe that He calls on us to copy that lifestyle. No-matter how

many people, deserving of some kind of friendship or support, come to your attention, living-a-day-at-a-time will keep your support for others within reasonable bounds!

It is good, therefore, that our guideline-for-service involves the 'living-a-day-at-a-time' principle.

Second 'Hint for Christian Living': It is Important to Decide about Priorities

One of the very familiar incidents in the New Testament is the story of the two sisters, Mary and Martha, on a day when Jesus came to visit. (Luke 10:38-42.) When the Lord arrived unexpectedly, Mary 'dropped everything', and sat at his feet – in order to hear properly what He had to say. Martha, on the other hand, spent her whole time busying herself in the kitchen, so that there would be a decent meal on the table for Jesus, and those he had brought with him. However, when Martha complained that Mary wasn't doing anything to help, Jesus said: "Mary has chosen what is better". He was more or less saying: "Mary is the one who got her priorities right." Jesus was not teaching that it is never worth concentrating on activities like cooking. He was simply pointing out that Mary chose the right option for that particular day.

It is good, therefore, that our guideline-for-service emphasises the making of decisions about our daily priorities.

Third 'Hint for Christian Living': In the 'Prioritising' that Believers Do, the Main Focus Should Be on Individuals.

When, I first typed out the words of the "guideline-for-service", my computer complained! It objected to my writing: "Decide *who* the priorities are for that day." In a very school-teacher-ish sort of way, it underlined the word "who" in red! It turned out that it expected me to phrase the sentence as follows: "Decide *what* the priorities are for that day." However, I am sticking firmly to the word 'who', because it constantly reminds us that the New Testament's main focus, in Christian Service, is not on duties, but on individuals.

It has always intrigued me that Jesus taught "Love your neighbour" (singular), rather than "Love your neighbours" (plural). I sometimes wonder if the reason He did that was to encourage us to put our main focus on individuals. Whether or not there is any significance in that, there is no denying that an 'individual approach' was how Jesus operated personally. If a large crowd gathered (usually because they had heard of blessing Jesus had brought to individuals!) He did something for them collectively: addressing the whole group about the Kingdom. Having done that, however, He soon got back to moving among them – healing, and having one-to-one conversations.

The material that takes up most space, in the four Gospels, is the accounts of the times Jesus spent with his small band of disciples – times during which He was able to give quite close attention to each one of the twelve. Next to that, in coverage, come accounts of the personal encounters that He had with other individuals. All in all, Jesus seemed to place a very high value on the individual, taking as much time with each of them as they needed. As I tried to explain in the previous chapter also, I believe that that is what He wants of us, above all: that we should be a 'blessing' to individuals – to specific men, specific women and specific children.

It is important, therefore, that the word 'who' has a place in our guideline. As we are doing our 'daily prioritising' we should think in terms of individuals – actual people – rather than duties. Rather than asking "What are my priorities for today?", let us always ask "Who are my priorities for today?"

Fourth 'Hint for Christian Living': We should be Open, at All Times, for Re-arrangements to our Priorities, Suggested by the Holy Spirit!

I want to say – right at the beginning of my discussion of this final 'hint' – that I believe that, *much of the time*, Jesus is quite happy for us to decide about priorities ourselves, without any kind of 'divine intervention'!

Let me refer again to the story of Mary and Martha that I mentioned earlier. In the course of the incident, Jesus said: “Mary has chosen what is better” (Luke 10:42.) That phrase “Mary has chosen”, suggests to me that Mary didn’t have some fantastic spiritual ‘revelation’ about the matter. She just used her ‘common sense’. She knew that Jesus didn’t call at their house very often, so she reckoned that taking time to listen to Him was more important than putting on a special spread. ‘Revelation’ *does* have a vital part to play in the priorities we choose, as I shall be demonstrating in just a moment. Nevertheless, there is a place for working out things for ourselves. I find the story of Martha and Mary a reasonably strong hint that Jesus wants us to approach each day with a down-to-earth, common-sense, consideration of what our priorities, for that particular day, ought to be.

Even in the midst of work-commitments or family-responsibilities, therefore, we need to ask ourselves questions like these: “Is there someone (or more than one person) I should be particularly concerned about today?” Are there people it might be good to speak to, face-to-face, in the next few hours, or even just to phone? What letters or e-mails could I be sending? What arrangements or enquiries, on behalf of others, would best be made today? Which of the folks I know should I be praying about before the day is out?”

Valuable though common-sense is, however, it is not always enough. Another relevant fact that comes over, quite strongly, from the Gospel record, is that the priorities Jesus observed were not always the ones that normal human wisdom, or ‘common sense’, would have come up with! Let me give you a couple of examples...

An influential man tells Jesus that his young daughter has died, but he believes that the Lord can deal with the problem. (See Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, and Luke 8:40-56). As they hurry in the direction of the dead girl’s home, a middle-aged woman, who has had an on-going gynaecological problem for twelve years, tries to get Jesus’ attention. Now, if I myself were doing the ‘prioritising’, I would have said (as nicely as I could, of course!): “Sorry, dear lady. We’ll be back later. But at the moment, we are on extremely urgent business. You have waited twelve years to get this problem sorted

out, so it won’t do you much harm to wait another hour or two” – and I would have hurried on to the child who had passed away. Jesus, on the other hand, immediately treated the older woman as top-priority, and only after he had dealt fully with her, did He proceed to the home of the little girl who had died.

A similar incident is recounted in John 11: 1-6. Jesus is in an area, on the banks of the river Jordan, where there is considerable interest in what He has to say. Suddenly, an urgent message comes, from Martha and Mary, that their only brother is very sick. Once again, if I myself had been in this situation, I would have judged that the district I had been working in was a receptive area to which I could easily return, so I would have made a beeline for the needy home of my close friends. Not so Jesus. He hung about Jordan-side for two more days – by which time Lazarus was dead! However, when we read on in John 11, we find that much more was achieved by the Lord’s delay, than would have been accomplished if He had gone in time to heal Lazarus!

Taking both these incidents into consideration, it seems to me that there will undoubtedly be times, in *our* lives, when Christ’s priorities are going to be different from the ones we come up with naturally! Is there anything we can do, then, to make sure that our priorities are always in line with what the Lord has in mind for us? Yes! I think there is! I suggest that we always keep in mind the promise Jesus makes in John 16:13-14: “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth...He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you.” I believe we can expect that, if we really want Christ’s priorities in any situation, the Holy Spirit will make them known to us. *With confidence in that promise as a basis, let us remain open, at all times, to the nudging of the Spirit with regard to our priorities.*

There is value, I think, in starting the day with a prayer (among other prayers) along these lines: “Lord Jesus, I have a rough idea of what I ought to be doing today, but please let me be shown if, in any way, I have got things wrong – if I am missing somebody, or even giving somebody an ‘overdose’ of my company! I really desire to know the priorities *you* have for me at this time.” I don’t believe

you will be disappointed by the response to such a prayer. If you haven't done so already, you will experience many such 'nudgings', as you go on through life!

Some readers will probably ask, at this point, "How do we know that it is the Holy Spirit who is 'nudging' us, and not just our own inmost thoughts?" May I delay the answering of that very fair question until the beginning of Chapter 29? By that time, I shall have covered much more biblical ground concerning the Spirit, which will give proper direction to my answer. In the meantime, I don't want to distract you from the main purpose of this present chapter, which has been to furnish you with a simple guideline for living in the midst of the many potential demands on your time.

* * * * *

Let me draw Part Three to a close by reminding you of what that guideline was. In fact, of all the sentences I have written over the last eleven chapters, I suggest that this is the only one you really need to keep at the *forefront* of your mind: EACH DAY, DECIDE WHO THE PRIORITIES ARE FOR THAT PARTICULAR DAY – BUT BE OPEN TO CHANGES-OF-PLAN, SUGGESTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. If you have that attitude, the Spirit will be able to "bring all things to your remembrance", as you take on your Heavenly Father's glorious challenge of Serving-Others-In-Jesus'-Name. So long as you are listening, the Spirit will ensure that your priorities remain in line with God's priorities.

As we have seen over these eleven chapters, the Norwegian Resisters coped – remarkably – with the enormous weight of need that surrounded *them*. They took the Resistance lifestyle very seriously indeed, but they didn't get stressed by the number of people, in various kinds of need, who came to their attention. Rather, they worked along the following lines. Each day, they decided who the priorities were for that particular day, while always remaining open to changes-of-plan, as suggested by the Special Agent who had been sent into their midst from Headquarter Overseas. Like the Norwegian Resisters, we too should value highly this straightforward

way of living – looking to our own 'Special Agent from HQ', as we play our part in the Replacement Army of the King of Kings.

* * * * *

Over the last ten chapters, we have been looking at *Areas-of-Service* for 'Recruits of the Replacement Army'. For most of the remaining chapters, we are going to look at *Sources-of-Guidance-and-Support* for carrying out those tasks. We have given a great deal of attention to what is often referred to as *Outreach*. Now we must turn our thoughts to what we might call "*Input*". The section we have just finished has been about *Gladly Working With Jesus*. The section we are about to start will be about *Getting Wisdom and Strength for the Job*.

CHAPTER 25: THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF GUIDANCE-AND- SUPPORT FOR ANY CHRISTIAN

Right at the start of this 'Input' part of the book, I would like to explain what I think is foundational – absolutely basic – when Christians are looking for guidance and support. Although I am committed to following through the Norwegian 'parable' thoroughly, in this chapter I am going to use an analogy that does not come from that story, but from the World of Work. I am doing this because I think it is a particularly helpful analogy, pointing to a principle about which all believers ought to be very clear in their minds. I would like us to think, for a few paragraphs, about *how employees get their orders* – their orders from the Boss of the firm in which they are employed.

In extremely small businesses, the giving and receiving of orders is very straightforward. Each employee sees the Boss, face to face, every day. In such a situation, the Boss is able to let every worker know, directly, what he has in mind at any given point in time. In larger enterprises, however, the giving of orders is not so straightforward. For various good reasons, the Boss will not be able to deal directly, face to face, with every worker at all times. Somehow or other, he will have to make his wishes known *indirectly*, through intermediary links of one kind or another. The way things have worked out in the modern job-scene (in Western society, at any rate), most employees have actually got two sources to which they must look for their orders – two links to their Boss's wishes. It is very important that neither of these links-to-the-Boss be neglected or disregarded.

The first link to what your Boss wants of you takes the form of

what I would call WRITTEN GUIDELINES. Frequently nowadays, new entrants to a trade or profession are issued with a series of printed documents, outlining what is expected of them at work, and indicating what facilities are available for getting the work done. One part of these Written Guidelines is specific to the actual job to which the new recruit has been appointed. It is a Job Description. Another part of the Written Guidelines has a more general application, and applies to everyone employed by the same enterprise. Nowadays, that is often called a 'Mission Statement'. There can be other documents too: e.g. 'Health and Safety'. Whatever the mix, when you start a new job, you usually get a batch of papers as guidelines for the task ahead.

In some jobs, these Written Guidelines are fairly brief, but in many situations they are very detailed. For example, here in Britain, if you are a school-teacher (as I was for a number of years) one of the documents you are given is what is called the 'National Curriculum'. That is a very full outline of what teachers should teach to each age-group. In addition, it often gives helpful advice on how best to achieve its requirements. In its entirety, it is a lengthy document! Nevertheless, you are expected to keep consulting it, all through your teaching career. Such a wide-ranging document, however, is not confined to the sphere of Education. I know that that there is an equivalent to it in many areas of employment. *A great many employees, in modern working-life, have a reasonably-detailed set of Written Guidelines.*

Your other link to your Boss's orders is not a document – it is a person. I would call that person your IMMEDIATE BOSS. There are very few jobs, nowadays, where someone is left to 'get on with it', using the Written Guidelines alone. Even though you may have no face-to-face contact with your Ultimate Boss (the Chief Executive Officer, or Managing Director, or whatever he – or she – is called) you are certain to have an 'immediate boss', fairly close-by, to pass on the CEO's day-by-day instructions, and to tell you how to apply the job-description in the actual circumstances you encounter. Almost all employees, in modern enterprises, have an Immediate Boss as well as an Ultimate Boss.

To sum up....A boss may have many different expectations of his employees, but there are two that are absolutely foundational to the working of his enterprise. Firstly, he expects those who are in his service to keep abiding by whatever Written Guidelines he has issued; and, secondly, he expects them to keep listening to, and responding to, the Immediate Boss whom he has appointed to pass-on his day-to-day instructions. That is the way a great deal of the work of modern society proceeds.

Now, the Bible makes it clear that the "Work of God" is to proceed along very similar lines! Believers have two sources from which the Lord (their Ultimate Boss) expects them to get their orders – Written Guidelines and an Immediate Boss. Let us give some consideration to each of these two vital links to our Heavenly Father.

* * * * *

Let us look firstly at the Written Guidelines for God's People, which is, of course, that wide-ranging, and fairly detailed 'document' – the Bible. Both the Old and the New Testaments are absolutely full of references to the importance, for every believer, of a deep involvement with the Written Word. Let me give you some key sentences from each of the Testaments.

To all intents and purposes, the first instalment of the Scriptures appeared when Moses descended from Mount Sinai after his long encounter with God. Exodus 24:4 reminds us that Moses "wrote down everything the Lord had said". Later that same day, Moses explains how God feels about the Scriptures they now have available: "These commandments, that I give you this day, are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up." (This is reported in Deuteronomy 6: 6-7.) The Almighty obviously intended *each and every one* of His People to be personally acquainted with his Written Word. He didn't suggest that the Scriptures were to be the preserve of the Priests or the Levites. Not at all! He wanted *all* of His Old-Covenant servants to make the Scriptures an integral part

of their lives.

A generation later, Joshua passed on God's command that believers should look constantly to the Scriptures for direction: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful" (Joshua 1:8).

Let us look at two very similar pronouncements in the New Testament. Writing to the Colossians, Paul urged: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Col. 3:16). In other words: "Make sure you have a thorough involvement with, and knowledge of, the Written Word". It was like an experienced school-teacher saying to a trainee: "Keep referring to the National Curriculum. It is full of essential guidelines."

In 1st Timothy 3:16-17, we find these words: "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training-in-righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." *I suggest to you that, if you ponder that sentence, you will realise that it is describing the Bible as "Written Guidelines – Issued by God – for every Worker in His Service".*

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Valuable though Written Guidelines are, in working life, they cannot *by themselves* convey to an employee exactly what the Boss might want in every situation. They tend to lay down general principles - principles which have to be *applied* in day-to-day circumstances. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, most Bosses make sure that, in addition to those written documents which have been issued, each and every worker also has an Immediate Boss to guide them on a daily basis.

The same is true in the Life of Faith. Believers frequently feel the need of someone to guide them in the service of the Lord – someone

to apply the contents of their God-given Written Guidelines. The Bible offers us a wealth of strong and helpful *principles* – but there are many challenges, encountered in everyday living, for which the Bible does not give us *exact, step-by-step, instructions*. Furthermore, there are numerous problems, encountered in modern living, that are not specifically referred-to in Scripture.

It is true that individual believers can attempt, by themselves, to apply biblical principles to the circumstances they face – but the fact is that God, in His wisdom and goodness, has ordained that we should all have someone to advise us on His behalf, so that we can properly fulfil His wishes and plans. He wants every one of us to have someone close-by, someone readily accessible, who will direct us to the appropriate parts of the Bible, just when we need them – an Immediate Boss who will explain to us how our Written Guidelines are to be applied, as situations unfold in our experience. I wonder, reader, who you see as occupying that role in your life?

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According to Jesus, that person should be the Holy Spirit. Do you remember the situation at the 'Last Supper' (as recorded in John's Gospel, chapters 14 to 16) when the disciples were getting panicky because Jesus was insisting that He was going to leave them. They had got used to his being close-by – someone alongside them to guide them, in addition to the guidance they found in the Scriptures. They knew that they desperately needed someone, other than themselves, to help them make important decisions – and Jesus assures them that they *will* continue to have such a companion, even after He himself has returned to the Father.

Let me give you the literal meaning of the Lord's encouraging words on that occasion: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another '*called-alongside person*' to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16). The word actually used for the phrase I have put in italics, in the Greek in which the New Testament is written, was 'para-klytos'. The King James Bible translates that as 'Comforter'. The NIV translates it as 'Counsellor'. But the literal

meaning of the word is ‘called-alongside person’ – ‘klaytos’ means ‘called’, and ‘para’ means ‘alongside’.

In verse 26 of John 14, Jesus goes on to outline what the “duties” of this “Counsellor” are to be: “The ‘Called-Alongside Person’, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” It would seem that two particular tasks had been assigned to the Spirit. The first was to teach the disciples everything they needed to know. (That would certainly include how to act, or react, in specific circumstances.) The second task was to remind them of relevant things that had been said in the past. (The kind of things that would, at some point, be recorded in ‘Written Guidelines’)

All that sounds, to me, very like the role of an ‘immediate boss’ in a work situation! You can see what Jesus was getting at. Up to that point, in the experience of those first twelve disciples, He Himself had been their ‘alongside person’, their ‘immediate boss’ – interpreting and applying the Scriptures for them. However, his real place was to be their Ultimate Boss. He was going away in order to take up his true position in the ‘High Command’ in Heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father. He promised, however, that the Father would give them another adviser, (another ‘called-alongside person’) to be with them – the Spirit of Truth.

Into that teaching, addressed initially to the first disciples, Jesus introduces a little phrase that seems to extend the teaching to believers in every age. His full promise was this: “The Father... will give you...another ‘called-alongside person’ to be with you *for ever* – the Spirit of Truth.” The words “for ever” suggest that this ‘Immediate Boss’ arrangement is not going to be a temporary one. The implication is definitely that, from then on, this ‘called-alongside person’ will be a permanent feature of the Life-of-Faith.

(Some of you may be confused by this emphasis on the Spirit coming *alongside* us, when there are also references – in the Gospels and the New Testament letters – to the Spirit coming *inside* us. The Bible definitely seems to show the Holy Spirit at work in both these modes. I shall say more about the Spirit’s ‘Indwelling Presence’ in

Chapter 39. For now, let us concentrate on His ‘Alongsideness’.)

Throughout the New Testament, there are frequent references to believers having some kind of ‘companionship’ with the Holy Spirit – a companionship that involves the conveying of ‘orders from above’. Let me begin with a few examples of this from the Acts of the Apostles. Firstly, Acts 8:29: “*The Spirit told Philip*, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it’.” Next, Acts 10:19-20: “While Peter was still thinking about the vision, *the Spirit said to him*, ‘Simon, three men are looking for you...Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them’.” Then again, Acts 13:2: “While they were worshipping the Lord, and fasting, *the Spirit said* ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’.”

The letters written by the Apostle Paul emphasize that all believers must take their ‘companionship’ with the Holy Spirit very seriously indeed. To the Romans, Paul wrote: “Those who are *led by the Spirit of God* are sons of God” (Romans 8:14). To the Corinthians he wrote: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and *the fellowship of the Holy Spirit* (i.e. the companionship, the ‘alongside-ness’, of the Holy Spirit) be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). (Notice the “all”. This is an arrangement for every believer.) To the Galatians he wrote: “*Let us keep in step with the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:25) (In other words: “Don’t get out-of-sync with your God-given companion”.) To the Ephesians: “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*” (Eph.4:30) (“Maintain a good relationship with Him”). To the Thessalonians: “*Quench not the Spirit*” (1 Thess 5:19 A.V.) (“Don’t pour cold water on what the Spirit says to you”).

Need I go on? To my mind, the New Testament categorically urges all Christians to pay great heed to the One whom the Heavenly Father sends alongside each one of us as a special advisor. I, personally, am in no doubt that Jesus wants *every* follower of his to look to the Holy Spirit as an ‘Immediate Boss’.

* * * * *

The two most important “Sources of Guidance and Support”, then (for *any* Christian) are these: *The Scriptures* and *The Spirit*. Over the next few chapters, I want to emphasise how important it will be for ‘Recruits of the Replacement Army’ to give equal attention to both these sources of ‘input’ into our lives – how important it will be for us ‘Christian Resisters’ to get that balance right.

CHAPTER 26: CHRISTIAN ‘RESISTERS’ MUST GO ON VALUING THE SCRIPTURES HIGHLY

If we turn our thoughts, once again, to the story from Norway that is central to this book, I am sure that the particular feature of the ‘Resistance Parable’, which corresponds to our *Immediate Boss*, has been obvious to everyone, practically from the start. The Special Agent, sent over to every locality by King Haakon and the Allied High-Command, is a very clear analogy for the Holy Spirit. What has probably not been so obvious is that the Norwegian Resisters also had *Written Instructions* which were vitally important to them, and which they held in extremely high regard.

I am talking, of course, about the printed reports of the radio broadcasts that came over from Allied Headquarters – the reports that appeared in the ‘underground’ newspapers, in the days after it was made illegal to own a radio. Of particular interest to loyal Norwegians were the regular speeches given by King Haakon himself. Nevertheless, they paid close attention, also, to talks given by others, close to the King – government ministers, for instance, who had gone into exile with him. These respected people sometimes dealt with different subjects from those covered by Haakon, but they were at one with him, and with the Allied High Command, in all that they said. Almost everything that came over the radio from HQ was written down, and quickly appeared in the underground newspapers. Even before these newspapers were distributed among the general population, they were eagerly scrutinized by the Resisters themselves.

Under normal circumstances, most newspapers are disposed of pretty soon after they have been read. In Norway under the Nazi occupation, however, citizens committed to the Resistance

tended to hold on to all the ‘back numbers’ of the underground newspapers! This was because the words of the King and his associates had on-going value. Months, or even years, after they were spoken, they were still a source of inspiration and information. Even news items – about successes for Resisters, in any part of Europe – were encouragements (and examples to follow) long after they had appeared in print. It was, of course, dangerous to be found in possession of such material. Nevertheless, because they appreciated its importance, most Resisters hung on to the newspapers, hiding them away in places in their homes where they were readily available, but not easily discovered by prying Gestapo!

As well, then, as holding their “Immediate Boss” (the Agent Sent-over-from-HQ) in great esteem, the Resisters also valued their “Written Instructions” (the Advice-in-the-Underground-Newspapers) very highly. This was partly because they saw that the two sources complemented each other. The speeches of the King and his associates tended to focus on *attitudes* that loyal citizens would do well to adopt, whereas the words of the Agent tended to be about *actions* Resisters would do well to take, in specific situations. The newspapers tended to be about *principles*, whereas the guidance that came from the Agent tended to be about *practicalities*. The Resisters understood, fully, that both were needed.

There was more to it than that, however. In the experience of the Resisters, there needed to be a clear consistency between the words that came, in written form, from Headquarters, and the words that came from the local Agent. Resisters would have been very suspicious if there had been discrepancies between – on the one hand – what an Agent was trying to get local Resisters to do, and – on the other hand – the line that had been taken by the King (as reported in the underground press).

Let me give you an example of this: The King said, in several of his broadcasts, “Proceed very cautiously with regard to acts of sabotage, because Nazi reprisals on innocent locals are incredibly savage”. If, however, the advice given by a local Agent seemed to be: “Let’s throw caution to the winds; let’s be bold with regard to sabotage, and show the Nazis the stuff we’re made of”, Resisters

would have known that something was wrong. When everything was in order, there was *consistency* between the advice that came from the Resister’s ‘Immediate Boss’ and the advice contained in the ‘Written Instructions’ that had come from HQ.

Partly, then, because their “Written Instructions” and their “Immediate Boss” complemented each other, and partly because the Written Instructions were a way of double-checking that what they were hearing from their local Agent was at one with what they were hearing from the King and his associates, the Resisters kept each of those two ‘sources of guidance and encouragement’ high on their agenda.

* * * * *

Recruits of the ‘Replacement Army of the King of Kings’! Christian ‘Resisters’! We, too, must keep each of our two major ‘sources of guidance and encouragement’ high on *our* agenda. There is a lurking danger that some of us could neglect one, or other, of these important provisions from the Lord. *In this chapter, I want to issue a warning about the danger of forgetting the huge importance of the Scriptures in the Christian life. For those who have experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit’s day-by-day guidance, there is sometimes a temptation to under-value the vital, on-going, importance of the Scriptures! But that is a temptation that really must be resisted!*

Down through the centuries there have been, from time to time, movements that have ‘re-discovered’ the part that the Holy Spirit can play in the guiding and strengthening of Christians. These movements have always come into being because the Church-of-The-Day lacked awareness of the Spirit’s full role, and, to my mind, they have made a valuable contribution to Church History. Sadly, however, there always seem to have been people, within these movements, who have begun to doubt the continuing relevance of the Bible. They have become so excited about the very real advice that a believer can get from the Spirit, that they have concluded that the Scriptures were no longer necessary – and some of them have specifically taught this foolish and disruptive idea to others.

If you start to neglect the Scriptures, you weaken yourself in two ways. In the first place, you miss out on the particular kind of input the Bible has to offer. You miss out on principles-for-living, on advice about attitudes – all of which is foundational for a satisfactory life. In the second place, you have no standard by which to evaluate what seems to be the Spirit’s advice to you in particular situations.

There is no way, of course, that the Holy Spirit would give you *bad* advice. Local Resistance Agents did sometimes do that (e.g. the one who suggested a ‘blitz’ of sabotage), but I don’t believe that the Holy Spirit would ever make unwise suggestions to us. What I *do* believe is this: *We sometimes mis-hear what He says.* We allow our own ideas, and our own hopes and desires, to cloud our judgement.

Jesus gives us a powerful hint about how to avoid this. He taught very clearly that there would never be any discrepancy between advice from the Holy Spirit, and advice from his own teachings (which we now have available to us in the Scriptures): “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears...He will bring glory to me – by taking what is *mine* and making it known to you.” (John 16:13-14.) So, the way to counteract the problem of mis-hearing the Spirit is to know the Scriptures, and to be able to ask: “Is the step that this ‘inner voice’ is urging me to take, consistent with biblical principles? Does it reflect the attitudes that Jesus, and the other biblical writers (especially those in the New Testament) commend to us?” If you can be satisfied with the answer to such questions, you can be confident that it was the Spirit’s guidance that you received.

An expression I often used to hear, in my very early days as a Christian, was “People of the Book”. It meant that believers should aim at being ‘steeped’ in knowledge of the Bible – not just in biblical facts, but in biblical concepts, in biblical attitudes. Over my lifetime, I have met many individuals like that, including quite a few who were not particularly ‘well-educated’, but who, nevertheless “really knew their Bibles”. *I am convinced that people of the ‘Replacement Army’ must consciously, and purposefully, aim at being “People of*

the Book”. In your enthusiasm for being ‘led by the Spirit’ do not neglect or undervalue the Scriptures.

You who are Young in the Faith! Seek out ways to familiarise yourselves with the Scriptures. (Begin with the New Testament. The Old Testament helps to deepen our understanding of much of the New, and also has its own particular contribution to make – but a good grounding in the New Testament makes a strong foundation for living the Christian life.) You who are Mature in the Faith! Positively encourage the ‘Young in the Faith’ to get to know their Bibles, and never, under any circumstances, think that you, yourself, have arrived at the place where you ‘know it all’!

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In the next chapter, I want to suggest some practical ways in which ‘Christian Resisters’ might make sure that they are people who never ‘neglect or undervalue their bibles’.

CHAPTER 27: APPROPRIATE WAYS FOR REPLACEMENT-ARMY 'SOLDIERS' TO MAINTAIN STRONG LINKS WITH THE BIBLE

At first sight, the most obvious way to maintain links with the Bible is, of course, to read it for yourself. It has to be admitted, however, that the Bible is not, altogether, a straightforward book. Because it not only deals with the World we know, but also with the 'Spiritual World' (and because it comes from periods of history that are different from our own) it contains many terms, and many ways of looking at things, that are not easily understood. The result is that almost all of us need help in getting to know the Bible properly. Throughout the whole of Scripture, this has always been recognised. In addition to frequently commending personal Bible-reading to believers, the 'Word of God' continually urges us to have Bible-Teachers in our midst, and to listen to what they have to say.

Now, the principal channel, used by the Church over the centuries, for linking Christians with Bible-Teachers, has been some kind of gathering of believers, during which (among other things) 'sermons' or 'addresses' or 'talks' were given. I would call such gatherings 'Teaching-Meetings' or 'Preaching-Occasions'. Not only do Bible-Teachers have a high profile throughout the Scriptures – so do Teaching-Meetings/Preaching-Occasions.

If my prophecy is true, however, and Christians eventually find themselves operating 'underground', the type of meeting at which Bible-Teaching (or Preaching) is given is almost certain to receive a 'banning order'! If you have read anything about believers in China during the 20th Century, you will know how difficult it was, for the Underground Church there, to hold meetings of any kind. If

meetings were arranged, they had to be small, and in secret – and, even then, great danger was involved. Consequently, if *we* have to ‘go underground’, there is no way that we will be able to hold meetings for Bible-Teaching, on the same scale as formerly.

That poses the question: “If ‘Teaching-Meetings’ (other than secret gatherings of a very few believers) are no longer possible, how are we ‘Soldiers of the Replacement Army’ to maintain this ‘People of the Book’ characteristic for which I have been pleading – this ethos of being ‘steeped in the Scriptures’?”

What I am hoping to show you, in this chapter, is that, in addition to public preaching, there are four other ‘channels’ through which we can get Bible Teaching – ways of receiving instruction that would be readily accessible, even if the Church had to go underground! Each of these Bible-Teaching channels has been used, to some extent at least, within the Institutional Church, but I suspect they are all going to take on new significance within the ‘Replacement Army of the King of Kings’.

It’s not that we will need all four of these channels all of the time – but I think it would be extremely helpful for us to get very clear in our minds what exactly is available. In that way, as our situations change, we can each choose a combination of ways that is right for us, and so continue to have a lively contact with the Scriptures.

Some of you may feel that there is little point in discussing alternatives to ‘Teaching-Meetings’ at present, since it may well be some time before gatherings of Christians are banned outright – some time before we become an ‘Underground Church’. In any aspect of life, however, if we become aware of changes that are likely to happen in the future, it is wise to start thinking, right away, about how we are going to deal with them. I want you to know what opportunities there are, so that you can be ready, when the ‘crackdown’ actually comes. In fact, I suspect that *now* is the time to start building some of these ‘alternative teaching-channels’ into our lifestyle.

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The first method – for keeping familiar with the Scriptures, if you can’t get Bible-Teaching in the context of meetings, is *Bible-Teaching in Written Form*. Nowadays, there are plenty of extremely readable books in circulation – books that serve the same purpose as a series of sermons. Into the bargain, in the 21st Century, there are some excellent Bible-Teaching articles on the Internet.

If you come across books, or websites, that you feel have been helpful for your understanding of biblical themes, you would naturally recommend them to fellow-Christians. That is going to become increasingly important. If we cannot get Teaching-Meetings, printed teaching-material will certainly be a possible substitute. It is true that authorities may eventually put embargos on books and articles, just as they do on public meetings – but banned books and articles are much easier to conceal than banned meetings! Reading sermons (or their equivalent), rather than listening to them, is a viable option, if the Church is operating ‘underground’.

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Secondly, when we are no longer on the receiving end of preaching, *Daily Bible-Reading Notes* have a useful part to play. There are many such booklets available: some suitable for those who are young-in-the-faith, and some that benefit mature believers. Written by experienced Bible-Teachers, many of them contain helpful comments and explanations, and constitute a good way of learning from the Word of God – especially if the particular Bible-Reading Scheme of which they are part encourages its readers to go slowly through the various books of the Bible. Over the years, you can increase considerably your familiarity with the Scriptures by using a good series of Daily Bible-Reading Notes.

A bit of a problem for those of us who are no longer within the Institutional Church is that most of the Reading-Notes that are around at the moment have been written to encourage those who

are serving the Lord through traditional church-structures. This means that we Recruits-of-the-Replacement-Army will have to make allowances for the points at which they are not relevant to the issues that *we* face.

In this connection, however, I have a suggestion to make: I believe that there are some people, reading this book, who are perfectly capable of writing 'Daily Reading Notes' that would be relevant to the new breed of outside-the-traditional-churches Christian that is appearing everywhere. I am sure that there is someone – if not several people – who would be qualified, spiritually and intellectually, to rise to that challenge! I sincerely hope that some appropriate and helpful 'Daily Reading Notes', for soldiers of the Replacement Army, will start to circulate in due course.

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It has to be admitted, however, that some people are 'not readers'. Over the course of my life I have encountered quite a few wonderful Christians, for whom books, and even articles, were 'no-go' areas. For some believers, what they respond-to best is "the spoken word". It is probably helpful, therefore, that the remaining two 'channels-of-Bible-teaching' only involve listening, and don't require reading.

Our third potential channel for becoming familiar with the Scriptures is what I would summarise as "Bible-Teaching through Conversation". By that I mean that, when two or more believers find themselves in a particular situation, and one of them knows verses-of-scripture, or passages-of-scripture, that are relevant, he or she should voice them to whoever else is present.

The Bible strongly urges believers to engage in that kind of teaching! Let me remind you of some quotes from both Old and New Testaments. (I have already used a couple of them in a previous chapter.) For instance, Moses taught: "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts...Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down,

and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7.) Also: "When your son asks you: 'What is the meaning of these...laws of the Lord?'... tell him." (Deut. 6:20-21.) Similarly, the Apostle Paul teaches: "I am convinced that you are... competent to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14); and also: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16.) The words of Moses and Paul suggest that 'ordinary' believers should be drawing on whatever knowledge of the Scriptures they have, in order to encourage each other – including their children – in 'godly' ways. The implication is not that they would be doing that through delivering sermons to each other! Believers are simply being encouraged to bring biblical discussion into everyday activities, and into family life.

I think it is especially good when Christian parents operate in this way – not deluging their children with endless Bible quotes, of course, but taking the opportunity, at key junctures in the young people's lives, to point out what Jesus, or an Apostle, or one of the Psalms, has to say about a dilemma that faces them. In the World-War-Two Resistance-Scene, children were greatly helped by conversation, in the home, that counteracted Nazi propaganda. I strongly suspect that we are going to find ourselves in a somewhat similar position. (At the same time, I am sure that the scriptures I have quoted point to the use of this kind of mutual encouragement at an *adult* level also.)

In case you are still in doubt about how important this 'channel-of-teaching' is, let me remind you that the Lord Jesus used the 'Bible-Teaching-Through-Conversation' method, much more than the 'Preaching' method. It is true that the occasional "sermon" by Jesus is reported, but a very large proportion of the Gospel record consists of incidents and conversations during which Jesus gave explanations or instructions. Go through the Gospels, and you will see that He did much more of His teaching through commenting and chatting than through 'sermonising'!

To my mind, this form of Bible-Teaching has been very under-emphasised in Church Life. Let us 'Christian Resisters' reverse that trend. Let us heed the advice of Moses and Paul, and let us

follow the example of Jesus. Let us make “Bible-Teaching through Conversation” an integral part of our lifestyle.

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My final suggestion – for maintaining strong links with the Bible, if we can’t hold public ‘Teaching Meetings’ – is what (to coin a phrase) I would call “*Bible-Tutoring*”.

In the student world, there is a clear distinction between ‘lectures’ and ‘tutorials’. Lectures tend to have a fairly large audience, and are usually delivered without interruption. Tutorials, on the other hand, are designed for either a small handful of students, or for a single student, and involve participation and discussion. Sermons – the principal channels of Bible-Teaching in the Church up till now – are very similar to lectures. If we find that ‘lectures’, as a means of Bible-Teaching, are banned, surely we can do something like ‘tutorials’? My hope is that those among us who have the ability to explain the Scriptures, and to highlight Biblical themes – as well as getting into writing books and articles, and preparing Bible-Reading-Notes – will get into teaching within very small groups, or even on a one-to-one basis.

It has to be admitted, of course, that the ‘tutoring approach’ is a much less economical use of a Bible-Teacher’s time and energy. There are, however, two great advantages in ‘tutoring’. Firstly, it is possible to tailor the teaching to the individual needs of the person or persons present. (In secular education, it is a proven fact that pupils learn much better if it is possible for them to have one-to-one teaching, or even instruction in small groups.) Secondly, if public meetings of believers are banned, tiny learning-classes – though still a bit dangerous, as the Chinese Christians found out – are much less easily discovered than large ones. (As for one-to-one tutoring of believers, that is remarkably safe!) When the Church has to operate ‘underground’, ‘Bible-Teaching to Very Small Groups’ is yet another way in which believers will be able to go on deepening their knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

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There you are, then – a simple approach, whereby ‘Christian Resisters’ can maintain strong links with the Bible, even when public Teaching-Meetings are no longer possible: 1) *Teaching-Material-in-Print*; 2) *Notes for Daily Bible-Reading*; 3) *Scripture-Teaching through Conversation*; 4) *One-to-One (or Very-Small-Group) ‘Tutoring’*. If we make use of these four channels, we won’t go far wrong!

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There is one more issue that needs to be discussed, before we leave this chapter. Obviously, we have not yet reached the stage where ‘Teaching-Meetings’ and ‘Preaching-Occasions’ are forbidden. Some of you may say to me, therefore: “You have urged us to build those alternative channels of Bible-Teaching into our way-of-life *right away*. What, then, do we do about ‘lecture-style’ preaching and teaching? Do we continue to have that also, or do we forget about it, because we are making good use of the substitutes?”

My own opinion, for what it’s worth, is that you should not abandon this perfectly good, and perfectly scriptural, channel of Bible-Teaching, *but you should certainly not be engaging in it with the same intensity as before*. That is not because there is anything intrinsically wrong with it, but because the Scriptures warn us to keep a proper balance between Words and Deeds, and you will not be able to do that if you overload yourselves with too much Bible Teaching of one kind and another.

At the very end of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, Jesus says: “Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn’t put them into practice, is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.” (Matt.7:26.) He is talking about the stupidity and danger of listening to what He says, but not living it out. He is talking about the balance between Words and Deeds. The Apostle James warns: “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22.) The ‘Authorised Version’ puts James’s

words this way: “Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only.” Critics of Christianity often say that we are “All Talk and very little Action”, and I am sorry to say that Christians have often tended to spend a great deal of time listening to Bible-Teaching, and not nearly so much serving others in Jesus’ name.

Soldiers of the Replacement Army will need to make more of an effort to get the balance right. If we do that however, there will be less time for us to be on the receiving end of Bible Teaching. If we are trying to involve, in our lifestyle, the alternative ‘channels of teaching’ that we will need when we go underground, there will not be time for lots of ‘Preaching Occasions’ as well.

I know of a group of ‘out-of-institutional-church’ Christians (quite a large group – the outcome of a fellowship that voluntarily ‘disbanded’ twenty years ago) where one of the former elders offers, from time to time, to give a series of weekly Bible-Teaching-Talks in the home of someone who has a sizeable room, for anyone who cares to come. Quite a crowd always turns up, including plenty of people in their teens and twenties. The fact that each course is ‘for a limited period only’ seems to increase the enthusiasm for it. People eagerly look forward to the next course, even though it might be some months away. These folks, of course, are strong on personal reading of the Scriptures, on Christian literature, on one-to-one ‘discipling’ of new Christians, and on ‘Bible-Teaching through Conversation’. It seems to me that they take ‘listening to the Word’ seriously, and yet having ample time to put it into action.

That is the kind of mind-set that will be required in the Replacement Army: On the one hand, developing those ‘channels-of-teaching’ that will be our lifelines when we are forced underground, without disregarding, altogether, the channel that has been so useful in the past, while it is still a possibility. On the other hand, being “doers of the Word, and not hearers only” – leaving plenty of time for “Cross-My-Path Care”, and other areas of service that our Commander-in-Chief considers highly important.

There is one more issue I would like to raise with you, regarding the Scriptures – before we look at other sources of strength and guidance such as the Holy Spirit, Leadership, and ‘Fellowship’. This final Bible-related topic is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 28: LET US MAKE A STAND, IF WE ENCOUNTER DISTORTED BIBLE- TEACHING!

One of the most surprising incidents, in the story of Norway under Nazi occupation, was the Teachers' Strike of 1942. It wasn't a strike about pay, or working conditions, or any of the usual issues that seem to precipitate that kind of response from employees. It was a strike about the history books used in Norwegian schools!

What happened was as follows. Early in 1942, the Occupying Authorities announced that they planned to revise all the school history books – which meant, of course, that they were going to give them a strongly Nazi interpretation. To begin with, it was only the history teachers who made a fuss. (As a former history teacher myself, I find this story particularly intriguing.) Not a single history teacher in the country agreed to comply, and every one of them was arrested! To bring them into line, a new Teaching Union was set up, committed to Nazi philosophy, and made compulsory. 12,000 out of the 14,000 schoolteachers in Norway (teachers of every subject and grade) resigned from their jobs, and the Nazi-controlled Department of Education had to declare a month's holiday – in February! Well over a thousand teachers were arrested and many of them were sent to a concentration camp, with dreadful conditions, deep in the Arctic Circle. In spite of the harsh treatment, the strike (and, consequently, the school-children's 'holiday!') continued for a further six months – until the Nazis completely gave up their plan to alter the text-books, re-opened the schools, and allowed the teachers to return.

It wasn't that the teachers were opposed to new interpretations of History. (The view of most school-teachers is that, provided revised interpretations are thoroughly proven, a fresh look at any

subject, from time to time, is to be encouraged.) What the Norwegian teachers were opposed-to was the introduction of interpretations-of-History that were totally inaccurate, and potentially harmful to young minds. They felt that no intellectually-honest person could accept the slant on Norwegian History that the Nazis were proposing. *They were shocked to encounter History-Teaching that was distorted and damaging, and thought it important to make a stand against it.*

Surprisingly, perhaps, the New Testament indicates very clearly that it is possible for *Bible-Teaching* to be distorted and damaging! The Apostle Paul, speaking about his own 'ministry' (his Bible-Teaching work) writes: "We have renounced shameful ways...we do not *distort* the Word of God." (2nd Corinthians 4:1-2.) He makes the same point, with different wording, when he writes to Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as...a workman who... correctly handles the Word of Truth". (2 Tim. 2:15.) Paul is warning Timothy that it is possible for someone engaged in Bible-Teaching to 'wrongly handle' the Word of Truth!

The Apostle Peter, referring to some of the 'Epistles' that were circulating among the Early Christians, says: "They contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2nd Peter 3:16.) Now, maybe Peter was simply saying, there, that a few odd individuals were distorting their personal understanding of the Bible. However, earlier on, Peter had written this: "There will be *false teachers* among you. They will ...introduce destructive heresies...Many will follow their shameful ways, and will bring the Way of Truth into disrepute." (2 Peter 2:1-2.)

Notice that Peter says: "There will be false teachers *among you*." Sadly, unlike the Norwegian situation, the threat of distorted teaching does not come from enemies of the Kingdom, but from within our midst! Now, I know that some evangelically-minded Christians will assume that these false teachers are bound to be people who take a rather 'liberal' approach to the Bible, and don't seem to value the Scriptures highly enough. The Lord Jesus, however, made it quite clear that even those who have a very high

regard for the 'Word of God', and constantly consult the Bible for guidance, are capable of twisting and misrepresenting what it says!

Consider, for a moment, some of the things Jesus said about the 'Teachers of the Law', and the Pharisees, in His own day. Not for one moment did He doubt that these men valued the Written Word highly. He openly acknowledged that they "searched the scriptures diligently". (John 5:39.) However, He also said that they were a "brood of vipers" (Matt 12:34.), and "Blind Guides" (Matt. 23:16 and 24.)! One of His criticisms of them was their hypocrisy (they didn't "practice what they preached" – Luke 23:3), but His other, equally strong, criticism was that they distorted and misinterpreted the Word. If you read through Matthew 15: 1-6, for instance, you will see how they twisted the commandment to honour your father and your mother. Similarly, in Matthew 23:23-26 Jesus shows how the Pharisees misinterpreted the scriptures about tithing and ceremonial washing. *Jesus understood only too well that those who value the Scriptures are also capable of distorting them!*

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I think it might help if I gave you one or two specific examples of teaching that gives the impression of being biblical, but is actually a misrepresentation of the Scriptures. As I do that, I am going to explain where, in my opinion, the teachers involved went wrong.

The first example I came across when I was watching a television documentary about a small denomination in the USA. (Unfortunately, I didn't make a note of its name at the time, so I cannot give you any further details.) To begin with, I empathised with the members of this denomination. They seemed to engage in many activities, and uphold many attitudes, that I think are positively Christian. As the TV programme progressed, however, it became clear that something was amiss. It turned out that these particular Christians had a profound hatred of Jews! They campaigned for a boycotting of Jewish businesses, for a ban on Jews holding public office, and even for the removal of all Jews from American society. Unlike Hitler, though, they did not base

their viewpoint on a political theory. They based it on what they claimed to be the teaching of the New Testament, including the teaching of Jesus!

On the programme, we heard a sermon from one of their pastors. Here is the gist of what he said. (I am going to put this in different print, to distinguish it from my own teaching!):

Look at the words of the Lord, as we find them in John's Gospel, chapter 8 and verse 44. Jesus is speaking to the Jews, and He says to them ('King James' Version), "You are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father you will do". Jesus is saying, then, (the preacher continued) that the Jews are the Devil's children, and, consequently, they are bound to engage in the Devil's evil work. Next, (he went on to say) I want you to look at Paul's advice in Ephesians 4:27: "Neither give place to the devil". My Bible tells me that there is no place for these Children-of-the-Devil in our Christian Country. We must hate all that is evil, and their presence among us is an evil."

Most Christians will sense that this is 'false teaching', yet it could be argued that it is 'biblically based'! The preacher felt able to say: "My Bible tells me....". What has gone wrong then? In the first place, he built his "All-Jews-are-Children-of-the-Devil" theory on just one verse (John 8:44) – and he had to take that verse out of its context to make it mean what he wanted it to mean! (If you read the whole of John Chapter 8, you will see that, though Jesus does have an audience of Jews there, his critical remarks are not aimed at Jews in general, but specifically at the 'Pharisees'.)

Now, if there is the slightest doubt about the meaning of a

verse, Bible-Teachers can dispel it, by showing that there are other quotations from Scripture that clearly back-up the line-of-teaching they are following. However, this pastor didn't produce any other such verses. *We should be very wary of any doctrines based on a single sentence in Scripture – especially a sentence that is open to other interpretations.*

The pastor's second mistake was to concentrate on John 8:44 (linked with Ephesians 4:27) but completely ignore the many verses in the New Testament that say we have to honour and respect the Jews! (Read Romans Chapters 9, 10 and 11, for instance, where the 'honour and respect' message is loud and clear!) Even if his theory that "All Jews are up to no good" had been truly bible-based – which it isn't – he should still have taken the 'honour and respect' verses into account in his teaching. *We should be very wary of any doctrines based on biblical comments that represent only part of what the Bible has to say on a particular subject.*

I so much want to convince you that this kind of superficial Bible-Teaching is positively dangerous, that I would like to give you another example. Some years ago, a preacher went around quite a number of churches, giving a very convincing sermon on a short passage in Psalm 91: "You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at mid-day. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you." (Ps 91:5-7.) The preacher stressed these last six words – "it will not come near you" – so the kernel of his message was "Nothing bad will ever happen to the Christian who holds on, in faith, to these six words". However, that's not quite the way things are, is it?

I believe that verses 5-7 of Psalm 91 *do* contain a genuine encouragement for believers (which I'll come-to in a moment) – but that passage has to be considered alongside *other* passages of Scripture. There are, for instance, plenty of New Testament references to Christians being killed for their faith, and also to believers being struck down by serious illness (e.g Galatians 4:13-14: Paul had a sickness that was a "trial" to the local believers; and

Philippians 2:25-27: Epaphroditus “nearly died”.) There are also plenty of warnings that bad things may happen to you: (e.g. Psalm 34:19: “Many are the afflictions of the just”; 2nd Corinthians 6:4-5: “troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments and hunger; 1st Peter 1:6: “You may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”) It is not honest Bible Teaching to concentrate on Psalm 91, without considering such passages. *If you are going to say “My Bible tells me...” about a topic, you must touch on the full biblical spectrum!*

(Incidentally, the ‘full spectrum’ of what the Bible says, on the subject of “Troubles”, is this: The Lord *does* have our highest welfare at heart, and, if we walk with Him, everything that occurs remains within His loving purposes, so we don’t need to be afraid, even when bad things happen to us. Nevertheless, we have to face it that bad things may, indeed, sometimes come our way.)

You may say to me that my examples are both rather extreme. You may argue that most teaching that claims to be ‘biblical’ is free from such abuse. Unfortunately, I don’t think this is the case. My considered opinion is that, down through the ages, alongside much wholesome teaching, a surprising amount of distorted teaching has also been served up to Christian people – not least in churches that might think of themselves ‘Bible-Believing Churches’!

I am not at all suggesting that there are preachers – or teachers or writers – who *intentionally* distort what the Bible says, but I do think that there is the temptation to get hold of a single verse (or passage) from the Old or New Testament, and make deductions from it that are not consistent with the whole sweep of Scripture. This is particularly dangerous when the person doing the teaching is a well-respected figure, or someone who is particularly persuasive with words.

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Happily, it is not difficult for us to prevent distorted teaching

circulating among us. We must actively pass judgement on whatever teaching we hear! That doesn’t mean that we need to have an extensive knowledge of the Bible, but, when we hear new teaching, we must ask ourselves two questions:

1) “Did the teacher show me a fair number of biblical passages that point in the direction that was being talking about, or was the teaching based only on a very minimal reference to Scripture?”

2) “Am I convinced that the *other* aspects of what the Bible says about the subject have been considered, and involved in the final conclusion?”

Up till the present day, Christian people have not, generally speaking, been encouraged to ask such questions. Many of us have been encouraged to beware of teaching that undervalues or ignores the Bible, but I don’t think we have been warned much about the dangers of ‘Distorted Teaching’ – teaching which refers to the Bible, but does so in a superficial way. The prevailing opinion in most churches has been that it is actually rather sinful to question any teaching that is put forward by those appointed to give instruction! I hope, however, that the two-question approach I have suggested above will become a feature of the Replacement Army

I don’t mean that we should be constantly suspicious of teaching – and we certainly ought not to be ‘nit-picking’ (i.e. looking for trivial details to complain about). I do suggest, however, that whenever an important principle is put forward those two questions should always be at the back of our minds. If we get the opportunity, we can put them to whoever gave the teaching. Whatever happens, we should never embrace teaching, let alone act upon it, if we are not convinced that we have a positive answer to those questions. *As Christian ‘Resisters’, we should – like our Norwegian counterparts – take a firm stand over the issue of ‘Distorted Teaching’.*

At the same time, bible-teachers among us must take their share of responsibility. Firstly, they must be sure that anything they put

forward, as a significant line-of-teaching, really is a ‘biblical theme’ – a thread that comes to the surface at various points in the Word of God. Secondly, they must be sure that what they say on the subject doesn’t ignore statements, elsewhere in Scripture, that put a different complexion on what they are teaching. Anyone who gives Christian teaching must be able to demonstrate, to those on the receiving-end, that it represents an *unmistakeable* message from the Bible – and especially from the New Testament.

That presents quite a challenge to Bible-Teachers. There is a fine line between, on the one hand, being thorough – and, on the other hand, administering ‘overdoses’ of scripture! *In spite of the challenge involved, however, I hope that those who offer Bible-Teaching, within the Replacement Army, will strike the balance I talked about in an earlier chapter – the healthy balance between insightful comments, helpful illustrations, and wide-ranging and accurate biblical backing.*

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That concludes what I want to say about the place of the Bible in the lifestyle of the Replacement Army. Next, I want to deal with three other ‘sources of guidance and strength’ that have always been considered important in the Church. I want to talk about the place of the Holy Spirit, of People in Leadership Positions, and of Fellowship, in directing and sustaining our Christian lives.

CHAPTER 29: TWO PERPLEXING QUESTIONS ABOUT ‘HEARING THE SPIRIT’

Throughout this book, I have frequently likened the work of the Holy Spirit to the work of the Secret Agents who, during the Second World War, were sent over from Allied Headquarters to move among local Resisters in various parts of Occupied Europe. In that scenario, the men and women of the Resistance constantly expected advice and direction from their Agent-from-HQ, and I have been arguing that the men and women of the ‘Replacement Army of the King of Kings’ will need to have similar expectations. Each of us will need to be ready to receive advice and direction from the Holy Spirit.

There are, however, two questions about ‘Hearing the Spirit’ that many believers find puzzling. The first is this: *In what way does the Holy Spirit speak to us?* Does his voice boom out, loud and clear in our ears, (even though no one else might hear the sound)? Does it come as a quiet whisper? Does it come simply as an especially strong inner conviction? Does it sometimes come in unusual ways – ways that are unconnected with actually ‘hearing a voice’? Put simply: How does the Holy Spirit communicate with us?

The second question is as follows: *When we receive a message that seems to be the voice of the Spirit, how can we check-up that it really is so?* How can we be sure that the words that have come to us are not just words we have unwittingly heard someone else saying, or even words that are the product of our own subconscious minds? (Some Christians might even put the problem this way: How can we be sure that what we are hearing is not, in fact, a suggestion from the Evil One? In Occupied Europe, there were, sadly, double-agents at work – people working among the Resisters who were actually doing Hitler’s bidding.) However they express it, Christians will be asking: How can we be certain that the message

we have received has genuinely come from the Holy Spirit?

Whole books have been written on these issues, so it is unlikely that I shall answer everyone's queries on the matter within a short chapter! However, I wouldn't want these problems to hold readers back from understanding one of the central themes of this present book: the Guidance of the Holy Spirit. At this point, therefore, I intend to pass-on several observations of my own about 'Hearing the Spirit'. They won't cover every problem, but they may help to show that there *are* ways of recognising, and confirming, the voice of the 'Called-Alongside Counsellor' whom Jesus has promised us.

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Firstly, let me comment on the question: "*How* does the Spirit speak to us?" It is clear from the Scriptures that He does so in a variety of ways. Sometimes His voice does boom out! In Revelation 1:10, the Apostle John writes: "On the Lord's Day, I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me *a loud voice*, like a trumpet". On the other hand, the Prophet Elijah had a very different experience. He heard '*a gentle whisper*' (1st Kings 19:12-13). (The Authorised Version translated that same phrase as 'a still small voice'.)

Acts 14:8-10 describes the Apostle Paul getting a strong 'inner conviction': "In Lystra there sat a man...who was lame from birth and had never walked...Paul looked directly at him, *saw that he had faith to be healed*, and called out 'Stand up on your feet'." The Apostle obviously got some kind of special knowledge about the man's faith, which he couldn't possibly have obtained merely from using his normal powers of observation. By contrast, Peter got an important message from the Spirit – about accepting non-Jews into the Church – through a *vision* (Acts 10:9-20), while Job talks about hearing God in a *dream*: "For God does speak...in a dream, when sleep falls on men." (Job 33:14-15.)

Incidentally, when Job talks about the place of dreams in getting divine direction, he makes a more general comment: "God does

speak – *now one way, now another*" (Job 33:14.) It would seem that Job had grasped that the Spirit would convey what He wanted to say in a variety of ways.

The answer to the question about *how* the Spirit speaks is this: You can't stereotype His ways of communicating with us! Over the years, He may speak to you in any one of the styles that I mentioned. He could speak to you through a dream, or He could speak by giving you a clear awareness of facts, or of a course of action, that you certainly didn't get through your normal senses. He could speak in a 'vision' (a picture which, having come to your mind's eye, has a genuine significance for you in your current situation). He could speak to you in a whisper: simply giving you a quiet nudge – or you could hear actual words that seem to be sounded-out in your hearing.

Don't worry, by the way, if any unbelievers hoot with derisive laughter when you indicate that you have been 'led by the Spirit' in one way or another. Remember the observation of Paul: "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. He cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned." (1st Corinthians 2:14.) Be grateful that you yourself realise there is a 'spiritual dimension' to life!

Before I leave the topic of "How do we hear the Spirit speak", I would like to mention something I have noticed in my own personal experience. On a surprising number of occasions, good guidance about a particular issue has come to me when I wasn't actually thinking about the issue! I have been amazed by how frequently useful thoughts (about people, or courses of action) have come to me 'out of the blue' – when I have wakened briefly during the night, for example; or first thing in the morning (before I am really thinking about anything!); or when I have been engaged in something practical, rather than pondering problems. Over the years, these out-of-the-blue thoughts have proved so helpful, that I have come to the conclusion that they came from the Spirit of God. They are a manifestation of Jesus' promise to us about the 'Called-Alongside Counsellor'.

Even more amazing to me – than these individual incidents – is when Mavis and I both experience exactly the same ‘out of the blue’ suggestion. As a couple, we get the impression, surprisingly often, that a specific person, or a specific course of action, is being ‘laid on our hearts’ by the Holy Spirit.

I don’t think that we have been *imagining* that it is the Spirit who is responsible for this ‘out of the blue’ guidance that so often seems to come our way. For one thing, what I have described seems reasonably common in Christian circles where people believe the promises of Jesus about the input of the Holy Spirit. Then again, there are good examples of the same thing in the New Testament. Let me give you a couple from ‘Acts’. When Peter received the prompting from the Spirit to take the Gospel to non-Jews, it came, *not* when he was carefully working-out what to do next, but when his thoughts seemed to be focussed on his lunch, and he was overcome by the noon-day heat! (Acts 10: 9-20.) When the Apostle Paul was directed to take the gospel to the Continent of Europe, he wasn’t debating the future in his own mind – he was sound asleep! (Acts 16:6-10.) The advice on which both these men acted was crucial in the ‘mission strategy’ of the Early Church. However, it didn’t come as a result of personal pondering, or of ‘planning meetings’. It came as an ‘out of the blue’ suggestion from the Spirit of God!

To be truthful, I greatly value the kind of guidance that comes to my mind ‘out-of-the-blue’. Over the years, I have often engaged in ‘thinking sessions’, either on my own, or with fellow-Christians. These sessions would always be preceded by a prayer, asking for the Spirit’s guidance. Nevertheless, looking with hindsight on such occasions, I now feel that, when I was on my own, I was often (not always, but often) carried away by my own ideas. With regard to ‘corporate decisions’, I now feel that the voice of the Spirit was frequently (not always, but frequently) drowned out by the introduction of so many different opinions. If it was a joint discussion, we usually reached a ‘consensus’ in the end, but – looking back on what materialised as a result of our final decisions – I feel that, in a disappointing number of instances, the course of action that followed wasn’t really the one the Holy Spirit wanted us

to take!

As with most things, there is a ‘happy medium’ about all this! There are some Christians who are paranoid about making almost any decision without some kind of supernatural ‘sign’! That is just silly. There are plenty of issues on which we are quite capable of making up our own minds – e.g. the example I gave you in chapter 24, about deciding daily priorities among the various people with whom you are in touch. There are also Christians, however, who have absolutely no concept of the Spirit’s guidance. It is vital that all of us, when faced with decisions that are not straightforward, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to us ‘out of the blue’, if there is something we might otherwise miss. It is good to leave time, before decisions are finally made, for the Spirit to speak to us, if He wants to. It is also good to be open at all times – even when there is no decision-making on the horizon – to ‘out of the blue’ suggestions.

There it is, then. When we ask: “How does the Spirit speak to us?” the answer is “In a variety of ways, and – not infrequently – out-of-the-blue.”

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That leaves us with the question: How can we be certain that a message we have received has come from the Holy Spirit? I believe that there are two ways of checking that what we have heard has, indeed, come from a divine source.

The first step in confirmation is to *make sure that the message that has come to us is consistent with the principles that run through the Scriptures*. I have already explained, in various contexts, that this must be the case. In Chapter 26, for instance, I showed that any specific advice, given to the Resisters by their Local Agent, was never at odds with the general guidance, given by the King and his associates, in the printed matter of the Underground Newspapers. (That was advice given originally, of course, in broadcasts from across the North Sea). I went on to point out that Jesus says that

the Holy Spirit “will not speak on his own”, but “will speak only what He hears...by taking what is mine and making it known to you.” (John 16:13-14.) Any ‘message from the Lord’, then, that is out-of-character for Him, is highly suspect. There should be no discrepancy between the Spirit and the Word.

In Chapter 28, I was talking about Bible-Teaching, and I emphasised, there, that anything that is put forward as Bible-Teaching should be consistent, not merely with one or two isolated verses of Scripture, but with a theme that runs through the New Testament (or even the whole Bible). In this chapter, I am talking about the Leading-of-the-Spirit, and, here, I would want to emphasise that anything that is put forward as a Leading-of-the-Spirit should also be consistent with Biblical principles. However we look at it – let there be no discrepancy between the Spirit and the Word.

The second step in confirming that it is the Holy Spirit who has spoken to you, on any particular occasion, is to *ask yourself whether you sense what I would call “appropriateness” about the message you have received.* Many a time, after an ‘out of the blue’ message has come to me, I have said to myself: “That really is appropriate! Why did I not think of that, with my own thought-processes?” Once the suggestion had come, it seemed the only logical thing to do! I would see that there was no other satisfactory course of action. Alternatively, if the ‘message’ was about a person (rather than about a course of action) I would realise that the person, to whom the Spirit had called my attention, was unquestionably the ‘top priority’ for that specific time. All in all, I have been surprised by how often I have felt that the Holy Spirit really had “hit the nail on the head” – by how often His suggestions have seemed totally appropriate!

Mind you, while claiming that there is a ‘logicality’, or an ‘appropriateness’ about the Spirit’s leadings, which generally becomes obvious right away, I do admit that there are occasions when the purpose of a ‘message’ is not at all clear. “Why on earth should I be calling on that particular person?” you ask. “What’s the point of going to that particular place?” “What can possibly be

achieved by undertaking that particular task?”

My own view is that, as you gain experience in following the Spirit’s lead, you grow in faith that He knows what He is doing! After a number of incidents when you were sure – even before you actually did anything – that you were doing the right thing, you gain confidence to follow a suggestion that is consistent with the Scriptures, even if you *don’t* understand why you are being asked to do it. (I even know of suicides that have been prevented because Christians were prompted to call on people whom they would, otherwise, have been most unlikely to contact!) Generally speaking, the Spirit doesn’t ask us to do incomprehensible things, but as we grow in experience of His voice, we can risk a few ‘leaps in the dark’ – provided, of course (as I said earlier) that they are not at odds with God’s Written Word. Throughout History, there have been some amazing outcomes when believers (like Abraham who, “when he was called...went out, not knowing whither he was going” (Hebrews 11:8 A.V.)) have taken a step of faith, after hearing the Voice of the Spirit.

To sum up: When we encounter what seems to be a prompting from the Holy Spirit, we can double-check it by asking if it is *consistent with the Scriptures*, and *appropriate to the situation* – though, as we gain confidence in recognising when the Spirit is operating in our lives, we should be prepared for occasions when we obey, without necessarily fully understanding why!

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A feature of the lifestyle of the Norwegian Resisters that impressed me greatly when I was reading about it, was the extent to which these fine men and women looked for guidance and direction to the local Agent who had been sent among them from Headquarters. They didn’t run to him at every turn, of course. If they found a shot-down airman in the woods behind their house, they didn’t leave him lying till they had consulted the Agent! They knew, however, that the injured man would never get to final freedom without the Agent’s involvement. He was a shadowy figure in their community,

but they welcomed his visits, whether he came to them ‘out of the blue’, or in answer to a request from them. (For various reasons, an Agent didn’t always respond immediately, but the Resisters knew that he would definitely deal with their problem.)

Men and Women of the Resistance Army! We will need to be like that also! When we are confronted by situations, we must use our common-sense, and we must also have an open ear for the voice of the Spirit – whether He comes to us unexpectedly, or in response to our requests. (Incidentally, we mustn’t be impatient if He doesn’t ‘jump to it’ as soon as we ask. He’ll speak, somehow, at God’s ‘right time’)

Let me repeat, also, that we need not be fazed by the mocking of people who think that – in our enlightened and scientific times – what I have been saying in this chapter should never be accepted by normal, rational, human beings. Let us feel sad for such people, because they are blind to the ‘spiritual dimension’ of life – and let us, ourselves, venture, ever more deeply into that dimension. May nothing deflect us from being ‘People of the Spirit’ as well as ‘People of the Book’! May nothing deflect us from looking to the Spirit as our ‘Immediate Boss’ as well as to the Bible as our ‘Written Instructions’.

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Unfortunately, there has been a feature of Church Life, over the centuries, that has all too often deflected believers from looking to the Spirit as their ‘Immediate Boss’. That troubling feature is going to be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 30: THE GREAT ECLIPSE

Since the beginning of Part Four – which I entitled “Sources of Guidance-and-Support” – I have been talking about our need to be directed both by ‘Written Instructions’, and by an ‘Immediate Boss’. I have tried to show you from the Bible that, in the Kingdom of God, our ‘Written Instructions’ are the Scriptures, and our ‘Immediate Boss’ is the Holy Spirit.

Let us suppose, however, that a questionnaire were to be distributed among an average cross-section of Christian people. Let us imagine that the leaflet were to include this question: “Who do you think-of as your ‘immediate boss’ in the Christian Life?” Am I not right in thinking that very few of those filling in the questionnaire would, in fact, give “The Holy Spirit” as their answer?

Am I not right in thinking that it is much more likely that the responses would be along the following lines: “My Pastor”, “My Vicar”, “My Priest”, “My Minister”. Some Christians (from branches of the Church that lay great emphasis on ‘shared leadership’) might put “Our Elders”. It is also possible that some reference might be made to other ‘bosses’ (further up the line, as it were): bishops, apostles, and so on. *Believers take it for granted – and are encouraged to take it for granted – that, somewhere or other in the Christian scene, they must have a HUMAN boss.*

Such an attitude, however – in spite of being so prevalent in the Church – cuts directly across some very clear teaching from Jesus!

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I would like you to consider with me, for a few paragraphs, some words of Christ – words that we find in Mark’s Gospel, Chapter 10:

“You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But so shall it not be among you.” (Mark 10: 42-43. A.V.)

I chose to use the Authorised Version translation for this quote, because it gives the literal, word-for-word, meaning of what Jesus says, which, on this occasion, we really must not miss. What Jesus is actually teaching here is this: AMONG MY FOLLOWERS, DON'T LET THERE BE ANYONE EXERCISING LORDSHIP, OR EXERCISING AUTHORITY.

Two separate Greek words are employed for the phrases ‘exercise lordship’ and ‘exercise authority’ – two words with virtually the same meaning. However, some modern versions translate the first word – the ‘exercising lordship’ word – as “the leaders of the Gentiles *lord* it over them”. I think they do this in order to avoid being repetitive – to give a bit of variation to the language. Unfortunately, this well-meaning attempt (to save the translation from being boringly repetitive) can be confusing. The problem is. that, nowadays, ‘lord it’ doesn’t simply mean ‘exercise lordship’. It means ‘exercise lordship in a nasty, dictatorial manner’. And, of course, not many Christian leaders are actually nasty and dictatorial! As a result, the use of ‘lord it over them’, in modern versions, deflects our attention from the real thrust of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus is *not* saying: “When leaders exercise lordship, they should do it in a gracious manner, and not like a petty dictator”. What He is saying is definitely this: “I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYONE IN A POSITION OF LORDSHIP, OR AUTHORITY – NO HUMAN BOSSES, PLEASE”.

A lady in Scotland – a personal friend of Mavis and myself – wrote to make her comments on my previous book, “Custom and Command”. Among other things, she mentioned the fact that, in the original edition of that little volume, I rather frequently put sentences into capital letters, if I wanted to emphasise them. She added: “I don’t like that at all. It’s as if someone is shouting at me.” With hindsight, I agreed with her. Consequently, in the later editions of “Custom and Command”, and in this present book, I have almost entirely avoided the practice of putting sentences in

block capitals. *However, what I am talking about in this chapter is something I definitely must shout about, because, by and large, Christians are not listening! AMAZINGLY, IN SPITE OF JESUS’ CLEARLY-STATED WISHES, THE CHURCH IS PEPPERED WITH HUMAN BOSSES!* There are many people in positions of authority among us! This is a blatant contradiction of Jesus’ teaching in Mark 10: 42-43!

Some of you, I suspect, may be tempted to say to me, at this point: “You are doing the very thing that, in a previous chapter, you insisted Bible-Teachers should not do! You are basing an important line-of-teaching on a single quote from Scripture!”

Not so! This is yet another of the ‘themes’ of the New Testament. Jesus, for instance, makes a point of repeating this very same teaching on a quite different occasion, later in His ministry. During the “Last Supper”, He once again raises the issue of the exercise of human authority, and, this time, He says: “You are not to be like that”. (See Luke 22:24-27.)

Then again, Jesus taught the same concept in a slightly different way when he explained, in the Gospel of John, that the Holy Spirit was the one who should be our ‘Alongside Adviser’ or – as I put it in Chapter 25 of this book – our ‘Immediate Boss’. In that chapter I got you to look at a fair number of relevant verses (John 14:14-17 and 25-26; John 15:26; and John 16:13-15), and I also showed you, from the Acts of the Apostles, that most of the ‘commands’ or ‘orders’ that came to the Early Christians did, in fact, come from the Spirit – rather than from human leaders.

There is a rather deep passage in the first letter written by the Apostle John. (1st John 2: 20-27.) The passage raises several issues, but among them is certainly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as compared with human guidance. Let me quote some of the phrases John uses: “You have an anointing from the Holy One” (v.20); “You do not need any one to teach you...as his anointing teaches you all things, and...that anointing is real, not counterfeit.” (v. 27.) The Authorised Version actually translates the first part of verse 27 as “Ye need not that *any man* teach you”! Bearing in mind what the

rest of the Scriptures say, I don't think, for a moment, that these intriguing verses are a warning against listening to Bible Teachers. The most reasonable interpretation of them seems to be that they are saying something similar to what Jesus' says about 'No Human Bosses' in Mark 10:42-43, or his 'Immediate Boss' teaching in John Chapters 14 to 16.

Finally, these same teachings of Jesus are further backed up by the Apostle Paul. Think, for instance, about Paul's words in Romans 8:14. Paul *didn't* say: "Those who are led by the *pastor* are sons of God". He didn't exhort: "Those who are led by the *elders*... or the *bishops*...are sons of God. His unmistakable teaching was: "Those who are led *by the Spirit of God* are sons of God."

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Over the centuries – in stark contrast to all this teaching and practice – various *human* figures have been the ones from whom Christians, almost always, have taken their orders! I am not-at-all saying that there has never been response to the Holy Spirit. What I am saying is that the normal, everyday attitude, down through the years, has been for believers to be guided by the *flesh-and-blood bosses* in their midst – by clergymen of various ranks, or by elders. The day-to-day service of others, in Christ's name, has, to all intents and purposes, been under *human management*. The one who has been treated as our 'immediate boss' has been *one of ourselves* – specially talented and experienced, no doubt, but merely a fellow-human-being.

The awful truth is that Authority of the Spirit has been *eclipsed* by Human Authority. Just as the sun can be eclipsed when a lesser body gets between it and ourselves, so has the Spirit been eclipsed by the intervention of the lesser body of Human Authority. The clear command of Jesus, found in Mark 10: 42-43 – that, among his followers, there should not be anyone exercising lordship, or exercising authority – is being almost universally ignored!

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Although the concepts of 'No Human Bosses', and 'The Holy Spirit is our Immediate Boss' are an undeniable part of New Testament teaching, I can appreciate that many sincere Christians may, at the moment, feel somewhat confused.

In the first place, many thoughtful believers may want to ask me: "If Jesus doesn't want human bosses among us, why are so many 'leadership figures' – 'Pastors', and 'Ministers', and 'Elders', and 'Bishops', etc. – mentioned in the New Testament?"

In the second place, many believers will be able to quote verses that, in contrast to Jesus' teaching, seem to say that we *should* be obeying our human leaders, and submitting to their authority! They will be asking: "How can we reconcile the 'obedience-words' of the Apostles with the 'No Bosses' line that Jesus takes?"

There are, however, reasonably-straightforward answers to both these questions. Over the next two chapters I shall attempt to explain what these answers are.

CHAPTER 31: AMONG FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, HUMAN LEADERS HAVE A VITAL PART TO PLAY - BUT IT DOESN'T INVOLVE 'BEING BOSS'!

At the end of the previous chapter, I admitted that it seems confusing that so many “leadership figures” are mentioned in the New Testament, if Jesus doesn’t want human bosses among us. “Why, oh why, Lord,” many readers must be tempted to ask, “do our Scriptures have so much to say about ‘Pastors’, and ‘Ministers’, and ‘Elders’, and ‘Deacons’ and ‘Apostles’ and ‘Bishops’, if You don’t want humans in positions of command?”

Jesus has actually already answered that question for us – in that very same passage in Mark that I highlighted in the previous chapter. Jesus *approves* of individuals with specific roles among the People of God – but He wants them as *servants*, not as bosses! Look again at Mark 10:42-45. As soon as Jesus had reminded his hearers that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship and authority over them, and had warned “Not so with you”, He said this: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your *servant*, and whoever wants to be first must be *slave of all*” (verses 43 – 44; also Matthew 20:26 -27). In other words: If you want to be “high up”, if you want to be “in a leadership role”, you must be a *servant!*

You can see how this works out by considering the role of a ‘pastor’. A pastor is a shepherd. Now, a shepherd is rarely the owner of the sheep. He is a servant, and his servant-task is to tend the animals committed into his care – to cast a watchful eye over them,

in case they stray into danger, or in case they are not getting proper nourishment. So it should be among God's People. Undoubtedly, God does give some people a pastoral heart. He undoubtedly wants people who will watch out for others. He wants people who will point out (to the person concerned) if he or she seems to be going astray. He wants people who will point out positive things too: liberating truths from the Word of God – nourishing fare for followers of Christ.

But we must keep remembering that Jesus made it abundantly clear that He doesn't want people among us who 'exercise authority' or 'exercise lordship'. So a pastor-figure cannot be our 'boss'. Jesus wants such a 'leader' to think of himself as a 'servant'. Nevertheless, he is obviously a valuable servant, so I find it helpful to look on him as a 'support-worker'. He must be respected as such, but – I repeat – he cannot be a boss.

The same thing applies to 'elders'. Even in the 21st Century, there are many secular communities where elders are held in high honour, because they are people with experience and knowledge. They are valued as advisers, as the guardians of the culture of the community, and as role-models. So it should be in any local Christian community. We should value the opinions of those who seem to have greater experience, and greater knowledge of the Scriptures, than the rest of us – and we should follow the example they set.

In secular communities, however, as well as receiving attention and respect, elders often have authority, and the power of command. Here, we must differ from secular communities. We Christians must remember Jesus words: "They which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...but so shall it *not* be among you." So elders cannot have authority, or the power of command among us. As with pastors, we must value Elders as 'support-workers' and 'watchmen' and 'role models', but we cannot look on them as 'bosses'!

This attitude towards Christian Leaders is very much backed-up by Paul. Writing to the believers in Corinth, he says: "Are you not

acting like mere men? (i.e. in a 'worldly' way, rather than a spiritual one)...One says 'I follow Paul' and another 'I follow Apollos'...What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only Servants." (1st Cor.3: 3-5.) Then again, to Timothy, Paul writes: "The Lord's servant... must be kind to everyone...Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance (i.e. a change of heart). (2 Tim 2:24-25.) To my mind, the picture of the gentle instructor, quietly hoping that his hearers will act on his message, is a far cry from the picture of an officer in the Armed Forces, who would expect immediate and unswerving obedience! I cannot imagine a secular army operating along these 'command-free' lines – but it seems that it is a support-worker type of 'officer' that Jesus, and Paul, are looking-for in the Army of the Lord!

The Apostle Paul also emphasises the idea that the Christian leader should be a role-model. To the Thessalonians, talking of the way he worked hard to support himself, he writes: "We did this, not because we did not have a right to (receive) help, but to make ourselves a *model* for you to follow." (2 Thess. 3:9.) He urges Timothy: "Set an *example*" (1 Tim. 4:12), and to Titus he says: "Encourage the young men...In everything, set them *an example*." (Titus 2:6-7.)

Two of the other New Testament writers also seem to encourage the 'role-model' view of Christian leadership. In Hebrews 13, we find this exhortation to believers in general: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way-of-life, and *imitate* their faith." (Verse 7.) Similarly, the Apostle Peter writes (this time to the elders themselves); "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers...not lording it (literally: 'not exercising lordship') over those entrusted to you, but *being examples to the flock*." (1 Pet. 5:2-3.)

Notice the word 'overseer' there. It points to the concept of 'watchman' – a concept that is often considered important, even among secular 'elders'. Elders should be guardians of individuals who are less experienced than themselves, and also guardians of the overall 'ethos' of their community. Paul uses the same word as Peter during his farewell speech to the elders of the Christian

group in Ephesus: “Keep watch over yourselves, and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” (Acts 20:28.)

Jesus definitely teaches that Christian leaders are not to be bosses, but servants – and the ‘job-description’ for those servants (that comes over from the other New Testament writers) is that they should be ‘support-workers’ and ‘watchmen’ and ‘role models’.

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Confusingly, however, there are some instances where Bible verses give the distinct impression that some of the New Testament writers – contrary to the teaching of Jesus – think that Christian leaders *should* be bosses!

Notably, Hebrews 13:17, in many Bible versions, says to us: “Obey your leaders, and *submit to their authority*.” Then again, the Apostle Paul seems to give the impression, from time to time in the course of his writings, that he believes he has the right to ‘command’ other Christians, or that he has been given ‘authority’ over them. Elsewhere in the New Testament also, there are examples of ‘bossy’ vocabulary being used.

I am fairly sure that Christians will never fully accept the distinction Jesus makes between the boss-type leadership of the Holy Spirit, and the servant/adviser/role-model type of leadership that He wants from mature and knowledgeable human-beings, unless some misconceptions about these verses are cleared up. That is the purpose I have set for myself, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 32: CLEARING UP SOME MIS- CONCEPTIONS, AND GETTING THROUGH TO BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP – HUMAN AND DIVINE

Let us look, first of all at Hebrews 13:17, which the NIV translates as: “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” You should know that that is a very misleading translation indeed!

I have two good reasons for making that strong criticism. My first reason is this: *Such a statement would be completely out-of-character for the writer of ‘Hebrews’.* The person who wrote that particular New Testament ‘book’ was a person with enormous respect for Jesus. Over and over again, he emphasises how superior Jesus is to anyone else the Hebrew People had ever encountered. According to him, Jesus deserves much more honour from them than their great teacher, Moses. (See Hebrews 3:3.) He points out that Jesus meets the needs of the Jews infinitely better than their High Priests had ever done. (7:26,27.) Near the end, the writer to the Hebrews challenges his readers to be sure to respond fully to whatever Jesus teaches: “You have come...to Jesus...See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks.” (12:23-25)

This makes me ask: “Could this writer, who tells us to make sure we are not dodging Jesus’ commands, be so hypocritical as to dodge them himself? With such a high opinion of Jesus, could he really be teaching the opposite to what his Master taught? Could he really be thinking: “Jesus may be superior in many ways, but in the matter of human authority, I myself know better”? Could he really be ignoring Jesus’ wishes that human leaders should be

servants instead of bosses? I don't think so! There must, therefore, be a better translation for that particular writer's words in Hebrews 13:17.

My second reason for being very uncomfortable, about the usual wording of this verse, is that *there is very little justification for any of the three words – 'obey' 'submit' or 'authority' – being used to translate what is there in the original Greek!* The Greek word that is translated 'obey', for instance, appears in the New Testament, in connection with leadership, seven times in all. On *every* other occasion, except Hebrews 13:17, the NIV (and almost all other modern versions) uses a much less emphatic phrase, along the lines of "listen to", or "follow the advice of". Why is it, then, that when it comes to Hebrews 13, the translators suddenly make the meaning of this Greek word much stronger, and insist on us having to 'obey'? If the translators had taken their normal approach to this word, they would have rendered verse 17 as "Listen to your leaders", or "Follow your leaders' advice".

There *is* a word, in New Testament Greek, which unquestionably means 'obey'. It is used, for instance, of evil spirits obeying Jesus (Mark 1:27); of children obeying their parents, and of slaves their masters (Ephesians 6:1,5). It is used in Hebrews (and elsewhere) of believers obeying the Lord. (Heb. 5:9.). In spite of knowing this clear-cut word for 'obey', however, the Writer to the Hebrews didn't use it when talking about our response to our Christian leaders! He used the milder 'listen-to' word!

(I would like to have gone into this 'obey' issue even more thoroughly than I actually do in this chapter – to tell you, for instance, what these Greek words were, and to give you the actual quotes for the 'listen to' word. However, I don't want those readers who are not particularly interested in academic details to become frustrated. In Chapter 36, I will tell you how to find more information from me, on matters that I have not dealt with fully, and how to get answers out of me, to questions that I have not answered to your satisfaction!)

So much, then, for the use of the word 'obey'. I am not particularly happy, either, about the use of the word 'submit'! Once

again, there is a word in New Testament Greek that is commonly translated 'submit'. Paul used it, for instance, when he said that believers ought to submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21.) The Writer to the Hebrews also used that usual word, in Hebrews 12:9, to point out how important it is to submit to our Heavenly Father. In Hebrews 13:17, however, the Greek word translated 'submit' is an *uncommon* word which does not actually appear anywhere else in the New Testament! It is a word which, when used in other literature of the period, simply meant 'withdraw'. It's a word that suggests "not pushing yourself forward", rather than a word that suggests "being under orders".

As for the word 'authority' – it doesn't appear at all in the original text! The translators of the NIV have just thrown in this extra word for good measure – three 'obedience-words' for the price of two! At least most other translations, quite rightly, make no mention of 'authority' at this point. (Usually, I find the NIV a very helpful and accurate version, but, with this verse, it seems to be rather wide-of-the-mark!)

Almost all the translations of Hebrews 13:17, however, use the words 'obey' and 'submit'. I suggest to you that they are wrong to do so. The actual Greek words involved are not the usual ones for 'obey' and 'submit', but words that suggest a much milder form of response. Furthermore, the translations we usually get of this particular verse are at odds with the viewpoint of the Writer to the Hebrews, who warns: "Be careful not to refuse what Jesus says" – and Jesus clearly says that no one is to exercise authority, or lordship, among us!

All in all, I think you are on very shaky ground, if you are using Hebrews 13:17 to wriggle out of the command of Jesus that there should be no human bosses among us.

* * * * *

What about the use of 'boss-speak' by the Apostle Paul, however?

From time to time, throughout his writings, we find phrases like “I command” or “My authority”. Does this not seem to show that Paul had begun to think that there *was* a place, in the Church, for human bosses – and had started to diverge from the line Jesus had taken?

I don’t think so! In the first place, I notice that every time Paul uses such phrases, he qualifies what he is saying with another phrase – something that assures us that, though he is speaking forcibly, he is not trying to be a boss! In 2nd Thessalonians, chapter 3, for instance, he writes ‘we command’ three times, but on the third occasion, he puts it this way: “We command *and urge*” (v.12). Now, ‘urging’ (or ‘exhorting’) is a pastoral word, rather than a ‘boss’ word. A boss doesn’t plead or urge. He just says what is to be done – and that’s the end of it! Paul, however, is willing to plead!

In this connection, it is also worth looking at the last few verses of 2nd Corinthians. All through the letter Paul has expressed himself with vigour and conviction. Many people would argue that he has spoken in a fairly ‘bossy’ way. However, in Chapter 13 verse 10, he writes about his ‘use of authority’ in these terms: “authority for building you up, not for tearing you down”. He seems to be saying “I’m here to give you constructive criticism, not to keep you under my thumb.” In the very next verse, he adds: “Finally, brothers... listen to my *appeal*”. Once again, bosses don’t ‘appeal’. They simply issue orders. Paul is an exhorter, an up-builder, an appealer – not a boss!

In 1st Corinthians 7:10, Paul writes “To the married, I give this command”, and then, immediately, follows that up with “not I, but the Lord”. It’s almost as if, any time, in his writings, he has said something that might be construed as being a bit ‘bossy’, he tones his statement down, by adding something less dominant.

I don’t think Paul could ever have adopted a fully-fledged ‘boss-man’ stance himself, or urged others to do so – because he had the same high opinion of Jesus as did the writer to the Hebrews. In Colossians 1:18, he writes “that in everything Jesus might have the supremacy” or, as the Authorised Version puts it, “that in

everything Jesus might have the pre-eminence”. For Paul, Jesus is supreme, Jesus is pre-eminent. Consequently, it would be out-of-character, for him also, to say anything that would undermine the teaching of Jesus. *I feel sure, therefore, that Paul would want us to interpret his occasional references to ‘authority’ or ‘command’ against the background of Jesus’ clear directions on the subject.*

* * * * *

It is vitally important, I believe, that we should all get to the point where we accept Jesus’ teaching that our ‘Immediate Boss’, here on Earth, is the Holy Spirit (John, Chapters 14-16) – while remembering that we have also been provided with ‘servants’ or ‘support-workers’ (Mark Chapter 10, Luke Chapter 22): people who can make a big contribution to our lives, by way of example, teaching, advice and even warning.

In New Testament times, servants and slaves were often very talented people. They could be much wiser, or much more skilled than their masters or mistresses. There were many situations where it was very sensible to heed their advice. *But they were not bosses.* We need to be very clear about this. Servants are not in command! Slaves don’t issue orders to those they serve! In those days, you listened to your servant, especially if he was speaking from his own area of expertise. You paid heed to your slave, if he had experience that you didn’t have. But, in the end, you yourself had to make up your own mind.

Well, not quite! In the Ancient World, even if you were in a position to have servants and slaves, you were still someone “under authority”. If you didn’t report directly to the Emperor, you would certainly have one of his representatives hovering somewhere near-by – an ‘immediate boss’, sent from Rome, to whom you were responsible. So, if your wise servants made suggestions on matters of any importance, you didn’t really come to an independent decision – you first discussed it all with your immediate boss.

I suggest to you that this is exactly the set-up Jesus desires among believers. He wants us to listen to, and to give heed to, those servants of various types ('pastors', 'elders', 'overseers', etc) whom He has provided to help us on our way. But, in the end, He wants us to make up our own minds, in consultation with that very trustworthy 'immediate boss' whom God has sent to each of us – the Holy Spirit.

* * * * *

This entire train-of-thought brings me back to the allegory of the Norwegian Resistance that has been so powerfully impressed on my mind and spirit. King Haakon VII greatly appreciated the presence, among the Resisters, of people with special skills and experience. He constantly worked towards arrangements whereby such people would be able to use, to the full, whatever they had to offer. Nevertheless, he was determined that the actual *direction and management* of Resisters – both as individuals and as local groups – should always be from Headquarters, through a unique 'sent-over' Agent, who was in touch with HQ in ways that even the most talented Resister could not possibly be.

In the earlier part of the Occupation, Haakon did not always get the response he desired. There was definitely a 'school of thought' – especially among some of the Resisters who had previously been officers in the Army – wanting things to remain organised along the former military lines. (The only real difference that these folks were prepared for was that everything would happen 'underground'). As time passed, however, the King got his wish, and, in the later stages of the struggle, pretty well all Resistance work was co-ordinated from Allied Supreme Headquarters. Throughout Norway, the key figure in Resistance work became the 'sent-over' local Agent. There continued to be a place, of course, for 'role-models', and for those with experience and expertise – but direction and management was left to the Agent who had been sent into their midst by the Allied High Command.

miss out on the contribution that fellow-Christians with special gifts and talents can make to your service for the Lord – the teachers, the scholars, the wise, the people with ideas or initiative, the encouragers, the 'watchmen', the prophets, and the men and women with experience of particular challenges. Listen to them, and respect them!

Remember, however, that they are not your bosses. They have the right to be listened to, but not the right to command. The Heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus have that right, and they have chosen to speak, partly through their 'Written Instructions' and partly through the 'Immediate Boss' they have sent alongside each one of us – even the third person in the 'Trinity': the Holy Spirit.

I firmly believe that the King of Kings is looking for an 'Army' in which the 'soldiers' have a clear idea of the biblical distinction between human leadership and divine leadership.

Soldiers of the Replacement Army of the King of Kings! Don't

CHAPTER 33: ENCOURAGEMENT AND HELP FROM ONE ANOTHER – THE PRINCIPLE

When I first started reading about the Resisters in Norway, the feature of their lifestyle that particularly struck me was the selfless support they gave to *absolutely anyone* who was suffering at the hands of the Enemy. Mixed in with that, however, I noticed that the Resisters also gave a great deal of encouragement, and practical help, to *one another*. In this chapter, I want to concentrate on the ‘mutual support’ that existed among the Resisters, and on its Christian equivalent.

If, as a Resister in 1940s Norway, you were sheltering an escapee, then fellow-Resisters – especially those who lived nearby – would give you food, or money, or clothing, to help you in what you had undertaken. If the person you were sheltering was injured, other Resisters would offer to play a part in the nursing, or would make the dangerous journey required to get hold of the necessary medication. If you were allowing yourself to co-operate too readily with the occupying regime – so that life would be a little easier for you and your family – one of the other Resisters would be sure to warn you that the Nazis were unreliable friends, who turned on ‘collaborators’ whenever it suited them. If you became discouraged about the slow progress the Allies seemed to be making against the Nazis, a fellow-Resister would remind you of various small but hopeful incidents that had recently occurred. All in all, if you were trying to play your part in the work of the Resistance, you could be sure of quite a lot of morale-boosting, and of practical assistance, from your fellow-Resisters.

To some extent, at least, this was a direct result of radio appeals from the King of Norway, and from his associates in the

government-in-exile. The King and his ministers realised that the task of working among those who were suffering under the Enemy's regime was an extremely challenging one. They knew that every Resister who got involved would go through stressful and difficult times, with disappointments and discouragements along the way. They understood that there was also the danger of apathy – of “wearying in well-doing” – especially whenever circumstances were less demanding than usual. They felt that, if there was to be proper support, from the Resistance, for people in need throughout the country, the Resisters themselves would have to be kept strong, by every means possible. They were aware that Resisters were already getting support from the writings in the Underground Newspapers, from the Special Agent who had been sent over from HQ, and from some very experienced and talented people among them. *Nevertheless, the King and his colleagues decided that Resisters also needed support from ‘ordinary’ fellow-Resisters!*

As a result, many of the broadcasts, made by Haakon and his associates, emphasised the need for an ethos of encouraging one another, of spurring one another on, of warning one another (when necessary), and of helping one another in various practical ways.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that the New Testament is full of amazingly similar exhortations to believers! The Lord Jesus strongly urges Christians to contribute to each other's lives. The Apostles, too, frequently tell us to encourage and strengthen one another. Over the next few paragraphs, I am going to remind you of some of the numerous scriptures that demonstrate this.

First of all, let us look at what Jesus himself has to say. In the final ‘pep talk’ that He gave to his disciples before his crucifixion (as reported by John) He said this: “A new command I give you: *Love one another*. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”. (John 13:34) He took up the same theme again, much later on in this ‘farewell’ address: “My command is this: *Love each other*, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). He even claimed that love for one's fellow-believers would be the distinguishing feature of the true Christian: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, *if*

you love one another”. (John 13:35.) Our King definitely seems to want his followers to back each other up!

The various New Testament writers have a great many suggestions about how, specifically, that might be done. Sometimes, for instance, they say that we should be giving a boost to our fellow-Christians in their times of weakness: “*Comfort one another*.” (1st Thessalonians. 4:18); “*Build each other up*.” (1st Thessalonians 5:11.)

Sometimes they remind us to strengthen our fellow-believers by pointing them, in the Bible, to the fullness of God's resources: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you *teach one another* in all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16.)

There are occasions when they suggest encouraging each other by emphasising the prospect of Final Victory: “The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command...and with the trumpet call of God...and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore, *encourage one another with these words*.” (1st Thess. 4:16-18.) Alternatively, they advocate discussion of lesser victories along the way: “He *reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles*...When they heard this, they praised God.” – Acts 21: 19-20.)

Another line they take is that we should stimulate and provoke each other, both to ‘Cross-My-Path Care’ and to passing on ‘Headquarters Truth’: “Let us consider how we may *spur one another on, to love and good deeds*.” (Hebrews 10:24); “Most of the brothers in the Lord have been *encouraged to speak the word of God* more courageously and fearlessly.” (Philippians 1:14.)

They think, too, that we should be warning each other about the dangers of ‘collaboration’ with the Enemy: “*Admonish one another* in all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16); “Encourage one another...so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13.)

Finally, they clearly believe that we must back each other up practically, as well as spiritually. Practical help will sometimes be material and financial: *“If anyone has material possessions, but sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”* (1 John 3:17.) (In context, “brother” seems to mean “fellow-Christian”.) Then again: *“The extreme poverty (of certain believers) welled up in rich generosity...to the saints.”* (2 Corinthians 8: 2,4.)

Practical help does not always involve money or goods, of course. For instance, Paul pleads with the Galatians: *“Carry each other’s burdens”*(Gal. 6:2). Jesus, too, commends simple acts of assistance. When He washed his disciples’ feet, He said it was an example for his disciples to follow: *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet”* (John 13:14.) So, whether it was financial help, or assistance of other kinds, Jesus and the Apostles were all for believers giving practical support to one another, as well as offering morale-boosting, and spiritual, encouragement.

As you know, the information I collected about life in 1940s Norway showed, very clearly, that the Resisters got a great deal of support, for the struggle in which they were involved, from one another. I hope I have demonstrated that the New Testament has shown, just as clearly, that Christians, also, should be getting support from one other, for the struggle in which *they* are involved.

Like the Resisters, we already have our ‘Written Instructions’ (the Bible), our ‘Sent-Over Agent’ (the Holy Spirit), and, for many of us – though possibly not everyone – a number of respected ‘elders’ and ‘role-models’ in our midst. Nevertheless, in the light of the teaching of both Jesus and the earliest Christian writers, it seems that, *in addition to those wonderful sources of in-put into our lives, we should also expect to receive encouragement and practical help from one another – not just from those with special talents and experience, but from ‘ordinary’ fellow-Christians!*

* * * * *

There is, perhaps, a somewhat puzzling element about that concept. In comparison to the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and Highly-Experienced-and-Knowledgeable-Believers, what can ‘run-of-the-mill’ Christians have to offer? Why does the New Testament have such a lot to say about the contribution of “one another” to our lives?

In order to explain this enigma, let me refer to an advertising slogan that was very prominent here in the UK some years ago (and may have appeared in other countries also). The advert was for a certain type of beer, and proclaimed: *“Our beer reaches parts that other beers never reach”*. Now, I have no idea what that was meant to convey technically (if anything!), but I want to use the slogan to say: *“Sometimes our ‘ordinary’ Christian friends can reach parts of our inner selves that other ‘sources of support’ can’t reach!”*

Needless to say, each of the other three ‘sources of support’ (the Bible, the Spirit and the ‘Elders’) have a far wider and deeper range of advice and encouragement, within them, than the ‘average’ Christian round about us is ever likely to have. Nevertheless, there are times when those others can’t get through to us – and the ‘ordinary’ men and women, who constitute our circle of Christian friends, can!

Sometimes the Bible can’t get through to us, because we won’t look into it, or don’t know where to look, or – in times of great distress – are too blinded by our tears to see what it has to say. A ‘word in season’, from a friend, can make all the difference, especially if the friend brings something from the Bible to our attention.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit can’t get through to us, because we are too involved in a whirl of activity to hear his ‘still small voice’, or are too deafened by our own prejudices to consider what He is saying. A friend – however humble – if he or she has heard the prompting of the Spirit, can often reach us on the Spirit’s behalf.

Sometimes ‘Elders’, and other mature and experienced people, can’t get through to us, just because they are so much in demand.

Unless our local Christian group is very small, such ‘leadership figures’ can’t keep their fingers on the spiritual pulse of all of us at the same time. It is unrealistic to expect them to have a genuine awareness, at all times, of how things are going for every one of us. It may well be right, for a certain period, for an ‘elder’ to know *you* intimately, along with the issues that concern you – but you must realise that there will be many others (except in a tiny group) who cannot experience that closeness. If, however, you have a circle of Christian friends, however small, there *are* people in your life who sense your ups and downs, your strengths and weaknesses – people whom God could use to get through to you!

Never forget, either, that practical help always comes through *people*. We can get encouragement, and stimulation, and warning, from the Bible, and from the Spirit, if we are able and willing to hear what these ‘sources of support’ have to say. Practical support, however, always comes from people – and we can’t expect the Elders to be the only ones who are offering that.

Fellow Believers! Don’t despise “one another”. Our circle of ‘ordinary’ Christian friends is one of God’s valuable provisions for us! And don’t forget, either, that your Lord expects you to *give* whatever support you can, as well as receive it!

* * * * *

All in all, whether you are deeply involved in the Institutional Church, or already see yourself as a ‘Recruit in the Replacement Army of the King of Kings’, you definitely need – among other sources of encouragement and support – the encouragement and support of fellow ‘grass-roots’ believers. Over the next two chapters we are going to look at how, among the Early Christians, that worked out in practice, and to consider how it might work out among us ‘Replacement Army’ types!

CHAPTER 34: TWO FAMILY-STYLE ACTIVITIES, AMONG THE FIRST CHRISTIANS, THAT STIMULATED ‘LOVING ONE ANOTHER’

Before I go on to describe the two activities that seemed to stimulate mutual love and support in the Early Church, let me remind you that – according to the New Testament – the first Christians, in any locality, thought of themselves as a *Family*.

Jesus put the seed of that idea into their minds when He announced: “Whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is *my brother and sister and mother*.” (Matthew 12:50) To all intents and purposes, He was saying: “I look on those who are ‘God’s People’ as my family.” Both James and John, in the letters they wrote, continue this approach, and often use the term ‘brother’ to describe their fellow-Christians. Peter too ‘thinks family’. In his first letter, he writes: “Love *the brotherhood of believers*” (1 Pet. 2:17), and talks about “*the family of God*”. (1 Pet. 4:17). The Apostle Paul makes several references to the ‘family’ concept. Writing to the Christians in Ephesus he says: “You are... members of *God’s household*” (Eph. 2:19) – and he repeats that phrase in 1st Timothy 3:15. To the Christians in Galatia, he urges “Do good...*to the family of believers*” (Gal. 6:10).

We must assume, I think, that Jesus and the Apostles are thinking of an “extended family” rather than a “nuclear family” (which, by definition, consists only of a father, a mother, and their children). The size of most of the local Christian groups mentioned in the New Testament is more like the size of the average ‘wider family’. Our ‘extended family’, of course, differs in composition for each of us. Nevertheless, the phrase ‘extended family’ gives us an

idea of how the first Christians were encouraged to think of their local group of fellow-believers.

Now, there are two activities that seem to stimulate a genuine spirit of mutual support within extended-families all over the world. In the first place many families have, from time to time, *gatherings of the whole family* – for weddings, funerals and perhaps ‘milestone’ birthdays, and for religious and cultural festivals: e.g. Christmas, ‘Thanksgiving’, etc. Those who arrange such gatherings usually try to involve as many of their ‘extended family’ as possible. Secondly, most people seem to value *keeping in touch, in between such gatherings, with some, at least, of the other members of the family*. As part of an ‘extended family’, folks make contact with one another in various small-scale and informal ways – until the next large-scale (and somewhat more formal) gathering comes along.

From the New Testament, I can see that that is exactly how the first Christians operated. They seemed to live out their lives within a very similar double framework: arranging, now and again, large gatherings of the entire local group – and socialising with one another, at various levels, in between. It seems to me that the willingness of those first Christians to engage in both these ways of inter-relating, contributed greatly to the ‘encouraging-and-helping-one-another’ that we talked about in the previous chapter. *I have become convinced that we ‘Replacement Army’ Christians will need to live out our lives within a very similar ‘double framework’.*

* * * * *

When it became clear to me that there would be value in ‘Replacement Army recruits’ getting involved in a lifestyle like the one the earliest Christians had for relating together, I began to look, first of all, at the New Testament references to ‘Whole-Group Gatherings’ (i.e. get-togethers of all the believers in any one locality). There were five features of such occasions that stood out for me. I don’t want us to be bogged down in too much detail, but I think that what *they* did will help us to know what we should be doing. I’ll try to keep this summary brief, but accurate...

First Feature: *These ‘whole-group’ gatherings were predominantly social occasions, and frequently (though not always) involved food and drink.* Paul writes: “When you come together to eat...” (1st Corinthians 11:33-34. See also 1 Cor. 11:20-21). If you read all these verses in full, you will see that Paul is referring to quite low-key affairs, with everyone bringing their own food and drink. Peter, however, mentions the word “feast” (2 Pet. 2:13), and Jude talks (in verse 12 of his short letter) about ‘love-feasts’ – so there were times when something grander took place!

Second Feature: *Though mainly ‘social’ in purpose, these gatherings normally had some kind of ‘spiritual’ input.* For instance, Paul shows, throughout 1st Corinthians 11:17-34, that he thinks that social occasions, where eating and drinking is involved, are good opportunities to “remember the Lord’s death”. (In Mediterranean lands, at any rate, bread and wine would always be to hand – whether for a ‘feast’ or for something more modest – so it was natural to copy Jesus’ example from the ‘Last Supper’ on each of these occasions. Sadly, so far as the Corinthians were concerned, Paul made it clear that greedy and selfish behaviour, on the part of some of them, was making a mockery of “remembering of the Lord’s death”.)

Seriously pausing before a meal – in order to remember Christ’s sacrifice – was not, however, the only ‘spiritual input’ at these ‘whole-group’ gatherings. Further on in Corinthians (14:26), Paul writes that, when believers “come together”, some of those present might have a suggestion of a hymn or ‘spiritual song’ they might all sing; some might have a ‘revelation’ (a prophecy) to bring before the others; some might have a ‘message in tongues’; and some might give a ‘word of instruction’.

Third Feature: *There were some ‘whole-group’ gatherings that were not social occasions. These were either devoted to teaching, or to prayer about a special issue.* Acts 2:42 says, of the very first localised group of Christians after Pentecost, that they “devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching”. As we go through Acts, we encounter definite ‘teaching sessions’ among the believers in a particular locality (e.g. 11:25-26; 14:27-28; 18:11; 19:8-10).

Sometimes, too, a gathering that had started off as a ‘general get-together’ developed into a full teaching session. This happened, for instance, in the ancient city of Troy, when Paul paid a flying visit. (Acts 20:6-12).

It was the same with prayer. Sometimes there were gatherings specifically for that purpose (e.g. Acts 1:14-15; 12:12), and sometimes a general gathering was led, by what was currently happening, to concentrate on prayer (e.g. Acts 4:23-24; 21:3-5).

Fourth Feature: *These gatherings do not appear to have been on set days of the week, or even on a regular and predictable basis.* The only place – in the entire New Testament – where a ‘gathering’ is specifically said to be on a Sunday is the teaching-session in Troy, given by Paul, that I mentioned a few lines ago! (Acts 20:7.)

Fifth (and Final) Feature: *I deduce, from the over-all set-up that is described, that the ‘whole-group’ gatherings helped the early believers to maintain a strong awareness of one another.* Populations were, of course, much smaller than nowadays. Nevertheless, even in those days, not all of your fellow-Christians would automatically ‘cross your path’, in the normal course of events. It was good for you, therefore, to get a reminder, from time to time, of everyone in your area who was committed to Jesus. Furthermore, such occasions would introduce you to new believers in your locality, and would alert you to particular people you could possibly be relating-to at a deeper level. The gatherings seemed to stimulate the kind of ‘group-consciousness’ necessary to fulfil Jesus’ desire that Christians ‘love one another’ as well as ‘loving their neighbour’.

I believe that similar “gatherings” – for all ‘Recruits of the Replacement Army’ in any particular district – should start to take place, as soon as it becomes obvious that there are a number of such believers in any given area. ‘Group-Consciousness’ needs to develop among those who now see themselves as ‘Christian Resisters’.

The Norwegian Resisters, in the 1940s, didn’t have that privilege. They were plunged, immediately, into a situation where ‘gathering

together’, of any kind, was banned. Fortunately, their pre-war relationships had taught them who was likely to be a Resister, and who was not. Also, the ‘Sent-Over Agent’ linked them to each other.

We, however, have an added advantage. There is still opportunity, in most parts of the world, for us to get to know our ‘fellow-recruits’. Until such time as we are forced to operate entirely underground, we should be building up ‘group-consciousness’ – becoming acquainted with the other ‘Soldiers of the Replacement Army’ in our area; and sizing up who, among them, the Spirit is laying on our hearts for a closer relationship. I am sure that the best way to do all that would be through the kind of ‘gatherings’ that the earliest Christians engaged in, when the ‘Army of the Lord’ was first being ‘mobilised’!

It will be perfectly adequate if these ‘gatherings’ reflect the informality of the gatherings of the first Christians. There is no need for them to be ‘regular’, or at set times, or in set places – though it would be unsatisfactory if they were so spasmodic and occasional that the sense of ‘group-consciousness’ was lost. I would hope that, as well as involving ‘socialising’, they would also have ‘spiritual input’. Words of encouragement and challenge, to the whole group as well as in individual conversations, have great value – as, indeed, have opportunities of singing together, of praying together, and even of ‘remembering the Lord’s death’. Food and drink, ranging from very light refreshments, through to ‘feasts’, also have their place.

Incidentally, there is never any mention, in the New Testament, of who, precisely, took the initiative in suggesting that one of these ‘Whole-Group Gatherings’ should take place. There certainly isn’t any indication of a ‘king-pin’ person who always had that responsibility in any of the local Christian groups. I am glad to say that, in my own (natural) ‘extended family’ there are a fair number of folks who are willing to suggest a ‘get-together’, and to make whatever arrangements are necessary. Sometimes it is one of our grown-up children and/or their spouses. Sometimes we ourselves start the ball rolling – or my brother and sister-in-law, or Mavis’s sister and brother-in-law. It could be a cousin, or even our children’s

in-laws. We are the 'older generation' now, but our parents and our aunts and uncles, when they were still with us, played their part. Within most reasonably-well-functioning extended families, there are a fair number of people willing to propose family gatherings, and get them up and running.

So far as we Replacement Army recruits are concerned, I hope that there will be a number of people who will make suggestions along these lines: "What about a 'love feast', with everyone making a contribution?" "What about a gathering, to receive teaching from So-and-So, or to pray about Such-and-Such?" "What about a picnic (bring-your-own-eats), or an outing, for the whole local group?" *However we do it, let us ensure that there are Whole-Group Gatherings among us, from time to time – as it becomes obvious who makes up our particular 'Christian-Extended-Family'.*

* * * * *

For the remainder of this chapter I want to show you (somewhat more briefly!) that "socialising-with-one-another" also played an important part in the lifestyle of the Early Church – and will need to play a part in *our* lifestyle.

A key to this feature of life among the first Christians is the word "*fellowship*". It first appears in Acts 2:42, where we read: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching *and to the fellowship*". In other words: in addition to being present at big gatherings to hear what one of the apostles had to say, they also engaged in something called 'fellowship'. We need to look into the meaning of that particular word.

In the New Testament, 'fellowship' basically means 'companionship' or 'socialising'. It is used, for instance, in 2nd Corinthians 13:14, to describe our relationship with the Spirit: "May...the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all". When we read that, it is helpful to remember that Jesus taught that the Spirit would be a 'Called-Alongside-Person' in our lives – a companion. It

is also helpful, however, to remember Paul's guidance in Galatians 5:25: "Keep in step with the Spirit." In other words, it is not enough for the Spirit just to 'be there'. We have to keep in touch with Him. We have to relate to Him. We have to 'socialise' with Him.

The word 'fellowship' is also used to describe our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and with Jesus. The Apostle John wrote: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1st John 1:3). He was teaching that our relationship with God, and with the Lord Jesus, though one of deep respect and awe, is, nevertheless, one of 'companionship'. When you read these words of John, however, do not forget the words of James: "Come near to God, and He will come near to you." (James 4:8). James is stressing the need to be pro-active in 'keep in touch' with the Father. Don't forget, either, the words of Jesus Himself: "If a man remains in me, and I in him," says Jesus, "he will bear much fruit." (John 15:5). Jesus is saying that it is not enough to have Him in your life. There has to be an on-going 'relationship'.

In the same way, surely, our 'fellowship' with our *human* companions will also need to be an on-going relationship. It will be something that involves 'keeping in touch' – the forging and maintaining of close links. The word 'fellowship', even at the human level, definitely has overtones of *reasonably frequent socialising*.

The closing verses of Acts Chapter 2 actually show us something of this "reasonably frequent socialising". Verse 46 says: "Every day...they broke bread in *their* homes, and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." Not a day passed without believers being in some other Christian's home, or other believers being in their home – sharing the simple staples of bread and wine that were normal for their culture. I realise that scholars debate whether this verse also means that every time they 'broke bread', they 'remembered the Lord's death'. For the purposes of this book, however, I simply want to stress the fact that they definitely socialised in one another's homes.

If you look at Acts 2:46 in full, you will see that, before it tells us that these first Christians 'fellowshipped' in each other's houses,

it says: “Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts”. Quite a few Christians think that ‘meeting together in the temple courts’ refers to some kind of ‘worship service’. However, the area known as ‘The Temple Courts’, though within the temple precincts, was just like a public square. It is not to be confused with the part of the temple that was known as ‘The Sanctuary’. ‘The Temple Courts’ was where the money-changers and sellers-of-doves had operated for many years. It was the sort of city-centre open-space where you could arrange to meet friends, or where you might very well bump into someone you knew. All in all, I suggest to you that Acts 2:46 is telling us that, day after day, there was socialising between Christians, either in public places or in private homes.

I have to admit that there are not many specific reports, in the book of ‘Acts’, of instances of ‘small-scale fellowshiping’ among ‘ordinary’ Christians. In Acts 18:26, there is mention of a married couple, called Aquila and Priscilla, who invited a young believer to their home, and cleared up some misunderstandings he had about Jesus. Then again, the last verses of Acts (28:30-31) show a constant stream of ‘ordinary’ folks popping in to see Paul, in a house he rented in Rome – but that’s about it, as regards descriptions of actual fellowshiping. When I come to think about it, I wouldn’t really expect detailed accounts of the nitty-gritty of their inter-relating. *Throughout the rest of the New Testament, however, there is such frequent use of phrases like “encourage one another”, “comfort one another”, “build each other up”, “teach one another”, “admonish one another”, and “spur one another on”, that it is obvious that a good deal of inter-relating and socialising must have taken place.*

* * * * *

In the earlier part of this chapter, I not only demonstrated the fact that the first Christians held ‘whole-group gatherings’ from time to time, but I also made suggestions about how we ‘Replacement Army Recruits’ might put that into practice. In the latter part of the chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that the first Christians also ‘fellowshipped’ a lot – but if I start commenting, now, on “Putting

Fellowship into Practice in the Replacement Army”, we will have a chapter that is much too long! Consequently, I am going to leave my comments on that subject to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 35: PUTTING “FELLOWSHIP” INTO PRACTICE IN THE REPLACEMENT ARMY

There are four (fairly short) comments that I want to make on this subject:

Comment 1. *Make full use of the normal ‘channels for socialising’ that are available*

When I was familiarising myself with the story of the Norwegian ‘Replacement Army’, I realised that its ‘soldiers’, although they had almost no opportunity for ‘Whole-Group Gatherings’, nevertheless engaged in a surprising amount of informal socialising. This, and this alone, was the background to the encouragement and practical help they were able to give to one another. I think that a brief account of how the Norwegian Resisters managed to socialise with each other, in a very hostile environment, would be a good analogy for us ‘Christian Replacement Army’ types, especially if we find ourselves in a situation where we have to operate underground.

I noticed, for instance, that the Resisters made full use of *chance encounters*. If they bumped into a fellow-Resister in the street, or at work, or at the sports-club, or at the market, or in some other public place, they took time to have some conversation. (Nowadays, we tend to be in too much of a rush for that sort of thing! It would be good to get back to it.)

In spite of the restrictions placed upon them by the Occupation, however, they had many other ‘channels for socialising’. Reasonably frequently, they would *call on one another socially*, (usually just for short visits) *or invite others to ‘pop in’ to them*. Alternatively, they would arrange to *meet briefly in a café, or at a local hostelry*.

Then again, they would *telephone* each other from time to time. (Mind you, under the Nazi occupation, and because, in those days, phones were connected manually, they had to be careful, because someone sinister might be listening in!) Sometimes they would even communicate by means of *notes dropped through each other's letterboxes*. Now and then, couples, or families, or small groups of friends – even in those days when food was in very short supply – would *share a meal together*. Occasionally, also, a few of them would go on *simple outings*: a picnic, a cross-country ski-trip, a fishing expedition, a trip to a near-by town, and so on. It was all very informal and spontaneous, but it did mean that the Resisters knew each other reasonably well, and were always aware if anyone, among the other Resisters in the district, required particular encouragement or help.

I suggest to you that very similar ‘channels of socialising’ will need to be a feature of *our* lifestyle, if those of us who are part of the Christian ‘Replacement Army’ are to fulfil Jesus’ command that we should “love one another”. We will need to call on one another socially, or invite others to ‘pop in’ to us. We will need to arrange to meet one another for a drink or a snack. We will need to share meals from time to time, or go on outings together. We will need to make good use of the telephone and the postal system. (Nowadays, of course, technological advances mean that we have a few additional ‘channels of socialising’: e.g. mobile phones, text messages, e-mailing, and internet forums. Provided that these *supplement* our contact with others, rather than replace face-to-face contact, these newer ‘channels’ have their value also.)

There are believers who seem to think that ‘fellowship’ can only really happen in some kind of official Christian ‘meeting’. Of course, it can happen in a ‘meeting’ – but it is important to grasp that *any* ‘channel of socialising’ is a ‘channel of fellowship’. Normal families occasionally hold a formal ‘family meeting’, but they don’t rely on that to keep love and care flowing among them. They rely, rather, on a wide range of much more informal ‘channels of socialising’. So it should be with a local ‘family of God’!

Comment 2. Don't worry if – as your local group of ‘recruits’ grows larger – you are not able to relate to everybody with the same degree of closeness.

Acts Chapter 2 is the place in the New Testament where we are first introduced to the word ‘fellowship’, and to the concepts of fellowshipping-in-one-another’s-homes, and fellowshipping-in-public-places. However, please notice that the number of committed Christians on the scene, at the time described in Acts 2, *was enormous!* Verse 41 tells us that there were at least three thousand of them! Now, there is no way, in that set-up, that everybody could have been close to everybody else. We are told that the believers ‘devoted themselves to fellowship’ – but they must have had to be ‘selective’ in their fellowshipping!

Even before the remarkable events of the Day of Pentecost, when so many people were “added to the Church”, the Christian group in Jerusalem was still a-hundred-and-twenty strong (Acts 1:15). I am sure that, within that group also, degrees of closeness must have developed. I don’t believe that over a hundred people could have related to everyone else in their group with equal intensity.

I once heard it said that an ‘extended family’ is like an onion (not because it might reduce you to tears – though it might!) but because everyone experiences their family in ‘layers’. Everybody has ‘immediate family’, with whom, usually, they are frequently in touch; ‘near relatives’ whom they probably don’t see quite so often; and ‘distant relatives’ (nothing to do with geographical distance) with whom they interact only occasionally. There is no need for anyone to feel guilty about such a situation. It is perfectly normal and understandable – and that’s how it will be in any local ‘family of God’ (other than one that is still very small, and hasn’t yet grown).

It is important to stress, of course, that the ‘layers’ in family life don’t stop people being genuinely concerned about family members outside their own immediate circle. Most people would gladly give as much help as they are able to a member of their wider family who was in some kind of serious need, even if that person wouldn’t be described as ‘close family’. There are no hard-and-fast divisions

in well-functioning families – and that should be the case, also, in your local Christian group. The fact remains, however, that there are varying degrees of closeness, both in ‘natural’ families and in ‘spiritual’ families.

Comment 3. There are, I believe, three factors that should influence who, in particular, within your local group, you should be relating-to closely

I can best describe the first factor in this way: “*The Prompting of the Spirit*”. I know that many people, in this ‘secular’ age, will dismiss, out-of-hand, such a ‘supernatural’ concept. However, I also know that many of my readers will understand, perfectly, my suggestion that an individual, or a couple, or a family, could be divinely ‘laid on your heart’. That is how Philip forged a short, but fruitful, link with a high-ranking Ethiopian official. (Acts 8:26-38.) Among the Resisters, a specific request from the ‘Sent-Over’ Agent – to give support to someone else in the Resistance – carried a lot of weight. I believe that that is yet another analogy, from the Lord, for us ‘Christian Resisters’: The leading of the Spirit is the most important of the criteria for identifying which believers we should be relating-to at a deeper level than is possible with the majority of our local fellow-believers.

The second factor I would entitle: “*The Needs of our Fellow Christians*”. Jesus didn’t mention anything about the leading-of-the-Spirit in the parable that we call “The Good Samaritan”. He obviously expected everyone who was involved to realise, for themselves, that the wounded man was their responsibility! Surely this would apply to our ‘brothers or sisters in the Lord’, just as much as it does to our ‘neighbours’ in general? Consequently, if you sense that any of your fellow-believers require some kind of “input” – input that you, personally, are able to give – then it is very probable that you should take on that person, and consider him, or her, to be one of your ‘immediate family’. (Incidentally, this can be for a limited period, or long-term; and it can be practical, material, social, or spiritual in-put.) The Apostle James writes (James 2:15-16): “If one of you says to...a brother... ‘I wish you well’...but does nothing about his...needs, what good is it?” I am certain that

Christians today ought, increasingly, to take these words to heart.

You do need to take individual priorities into account, of course. Someone who is new to the district, or has very little fellowship, may require greater attention – for the immediate future, at any rate – than someone who has plenty of other Christian friends. Sometimes, you will need to concentrate on ‘emergencies’, even if it means somewhat neglecting, for the time being, your regular companions. (Flexibility is very necessary in ‘natural’ families, as well as in the family of God.) There is, in fact, so much need, of various kinds, around us, that we will frequently have to ask ourselves, and the Holy Spirit, who and what the priorities are to be.

The final factor – in deciding who, in particular, within our ‘Extended Christian Family’, we should relate-to – may, at first sight, seem rather selfish. It is, in fact: “*Our Own, Personal, Needs*”. We all require *some* friends with whom we have a genuine ‘rapport’, people whose company is especially congenial. There is nothing basically wrong with cultivating the friendship of Christians whom we find likeable, and ‘on the same wavelength’ as ourselves. Furthermore, we all need people around us who know how to encourage us in various positive ways (including ‘spiritual’ encouragement). I would go as far as to say that we all need at least one person, in our circle of friends, in whom we can confide – someone to whom, if necessary, we can ‘confess our faults’. If, therefore, we find men and women, within our ‘Extended Christian Family’, whom we know would be ‘good for us’, one way or another, we should make it clear that we value their friendship.

Needless to say, we mustn’t over-do this ‘My Personal Needs’ factor. Don’t try to surround yourself solely with ‘soul-mates’! By all means link up with folks you particularly like, or from whom you think will be able to receive something of real value in your Christian experience. However, be very much aware of those believers to whom you may be able to give something of value, at various levels. Above all, devote yourself, especially, to those whom the Lord has laid on your heart. If you follow this three-fold approach, you will not go very far wrong.

Comment 4. We should, however, be on our guard against getting so involved with our fellow-Christians, that we leave little time (or no time!) for our “neighbours”.

It is essential to remember, always, that Jesus taught that the two “greatest commandments” were “Love the Lord your God” and “Love your Neighbour”. He never put ‘Love One Another’ in the same exalted category! Anything that gets in the way of either of those two top-priority purposes has to be re-adjusted, no matter how valuable it may seem. If we have concentrated so much on caring for our fellow-believers that ‘neighbours’ – needy people who cross our paths or are brought to our attention – are neglected, we have, to some extent at least, got things muddled.

Some Christians seem to have been confused by a sentence in the writings of Paul. In Galatians 6:10, we find him saying: “Let us do good to all men, *especially* to the family of believers”. Sadly, the lifestyle of some Christians would make you think that Paul had said: “Let us do good *exclusively* to the family of believers”. In a world of need, they only seem to be in touch with fellow-believers, rather than with people in general. However, the main thrust of Galatians 6:10 is definitely “DO GOOD TO ALL MEN”, followed by an afterthought, along these lines: “Within that over-all aim, make a special point of seeing that your fellow-Christians are kept ‘fighting fit’ – so that the Church can, in fact, “do good to all men”.

It is important to keep the balance right. Galatians 6:10 is actually the *only* place where Paul says that special care should be given to our fellow-believers. Using various forms of speech, he frequently urges believers to “do good to all people” (e.g. Romans 15:2; Galatians 5:14; 1st Timothy 5:10; 2nd Tim. 2:21). His exhortation in Galatians 6 is the only time that doing good to the family of God is specified. *All through the New Testament, the intention seems to be that, generally speaking, we aim at doing good to anyone who requires it – all the while trying to make sure that our fellow-Christians are in a position to serve both their Heavenly Father, and their fellow-men, to the full.*

* * * * *

That concludes what I have wanted to say about our “Sources of Guidance and Support”. I am very aware that, in this section – as in the previous section, entitled “Areas of Service” – I have covered a great deal of ground. I have shown many features of the lifestyle Jesus is looking for in those He calls to be involved in His Replacement Army.

It is very important, however, that you don’t view Part Three of this book as nothing more than a long list of duties or responsibilities. If you do that, you will almost certainly ‘weary in well-doing’ before you ever get started!

Now, I agree that Part Three *could* be interpreted as a list-of-duties. You *could* say to yourselves: I must remember 1) To care for anyone in need who crosses my path; 2) Not to miss anyone out, just because I am not naturally drawn to them; 3) To keep the many facets of ‘Headquarters Truth’ flowing from my lips at every opportunity; 4) To pray without ceasing; 5) To be aware of the needs of society, and of my local community, as well as the needs of individuals; 6) To be prepared to do some organising, and, possibly, to be involved in some organisations; 7) To get deeply into the Bible; 8) To be on the look-out for distorted Bible-Teaching; 9) To listen always for the voice of the Spirit; 10) to value the input of mature Christians; 11) To be prepared to make my own decisions, with guidance from the Word, the Spirit and the wisdom of others; 12) Not to neglect fellowshiping with other Christians, provided that doesn’t cause me to neglect my ‘neighbours’; 13) Not just to meet up with other believers, but to encourage them and support them in every way possible.

If you think in ‘list-of-duties’ terms, however, you are probably doomed to failure! The sad thing is that, if we have too many duties and responsibilities thrust upon us, they become wearisome chores rather than worthwhile challenges.

I suggest to you that the secret is to think of all these activities

as ‘channels’ rather than ‘chores’ – channels through which the Lord might call upon you to serve Him. Each of them is a possible area-of-activity in which He might use you. In giving you, above, that list of thirteen activities (some of which have several distinct aspects to them) I haven’t been giving you a *programme* that you are required to carry out fully at all times. I have simply been giving you a *preview* of the various areas-of-activity in which you might find yourselves at any given time, as you get involved in the Lord’s service, in a ‘Replacement Army’ sort of way.

Let me put all this in another way: *The Christian life is about RESPONSE, rather than about RESPONSIBILITIES.* The Lord says that *He* shoulders the responsibility for getting things done, though He very much wants to work through us. Our task is simply to respond to Him, situation by situation, as He confronts us with opportunities, and leads us in them through His Word and His Spirit.

There are many Scriptures that point us in this direction. Back in the Old Testament, Solomon wrote: “*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.*” (Psalm 127:1). Jesus says: “*Apart from me, you can do nothing.*” (John 15:5.) Alongside that very clear pronouncement, He teaches that He can work through us if we ‘remain’ in Him: “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. *If a man remains in me, he will bear much fruit.*” (John 15:4,5). Paul writes: “Not that we are competent in ourselves...but *our competence comes from God*” (2nd Corinthians 3:5).

Part Three of this book, then, has not been a giant survey of responsibilities. It has been, rather, a survey of the different channels through which the King of Kings might ask us to respond at any given time.

So far, under the heading “Encouragements and Challenges for Recruits of the Replacement Army” we have looked at sections called “Areas of Service” and “Sources of Support”. There remains one final section. It involves a tying-up of loose ends, and some final exhortations to ‘recruits’ of the Replacement Army, as we launch out into the future. I have called it “Into Action!”

SECTION III: INTO ACTION!

CHAPTER 36: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT HOLD SOME OF YOU BACK

I can well imagine that some of you might say that you are not yet ready for a group of chapters entitled “Into Action”. You may think that I have not dealt adequately (or at all!) with a number of relevant questions – questions for which you feel you need an answer, before you can launch into the Replacement Army lifestyle.

Some of you may consider, for instance, that I have not given you sufficient biblical evidence for my claim that we should be turning our backs on the age-old practice of having ‘bosses’ within the Church. Some of you may feel that I might have gone more deeply into the subject of ‘The Forces of Evil’. Then again, some of you may be shocked that I have made no mention whatever of the topic of “Worship” – even though one of the main responses expected of a Christian is to worship God! Others among you may be disappointed that I haven’t dealt with a particular practical issue which you are already facing, or which you might face, if you step-out into the unknown of ‘Replacement Army’ life. *I fully accept that I haven’t covered absolutely every issue that might have been raised in readers’ minds, in the course of this book.*

There is, of course, a good general reason for missing out material from a book, even though that material is relevant. It is never good for a book to be too long. Even the most committed of readers will eventually ‘weary in well-doing’, if they have to take-on-board too many ideas and concepts. Sometimes people describe a book, which totally covers every aspect of a subject, as an “*exhaustive*

survey”. Far too often, however, such a book turns out to be just plain *exhausting*! It is sometimes necessary, therefore, for a writer to exclude material, even though it is connected with the themes that are being discussed. Consequently, this book does *not* cover everything that might be said on the various topics that have been introduced.

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There are, however, three steps that writers can take, in order to compensate for this somewhat unsatisfactory state-of-affairs. *In the first place, writers can allow themselves to be questioned further, about the contents of a particular book.* When, for example, my earlier little volume (“Custom and Command”) first appeared, it was printed by a local printer, and I sent out copies myself, to anyone who asked for one. My postal address and e-mail address were put at the back of each copy, to make it easy for other potential readers to place an order. (As time passed, there was much more demand for copies than we had envisaged, and, eventually, we had to switch to printing and distribution through internet-publishers – which is what we have done, from the start, with this present book.) For a number of years, though – because people with copies of the book had contact-addresses for me – they were able to send letters and e-mails, asking me questions that had arisen in their minds as they read. Looking back, I am glad that this happened, because that is how I began to understand that there is often a genuine need for readers to get further clarification, or to have light shed on a relevant matter that has not actually been dealt with in the book.

All the question-answering correspondence, which followed the publication of “Custom and Command”, was a worthwhile extension of what I had been trying to do, and gave me an encouraging sense of my book reaching its full potential. In addition to that, the letters and e-mails forged acquaintanceships and friendships, for my wife and myself, with a wide variety of interesting people from all over the world.

Nevertheless, there was a ‘down side’ to engaging in all that

correspondence! It was incredibly time-consuming for me. Having to consider how best to respond to so many individual enquiries, and then getting the actual replies down on paper, turned out to be quite an extensive task. Bearing in mind that I was *also* trying to write this present book, *and* to serve the Lord in the wide-ranging ‘areas of service’ I have been describing to you, I was often tempted to feel that I was spreading myself too thinly.

Believe me, I am just as keen to answer questions that arise from “The Remarkable Replacement Army” as I was to respond to people who contacted me about “Custom and Command”. At the same time, I want to preserve a right balance in my life. Although the writing of this second book has now been completed, I see other calls on my time starting to emerge. On the ‘family front’, for instance, a little group of grandchildren, for Mavis and me, is slowly but surely building up. It is certainly right to be involved there. On the ‘fellowship front’, I am certain that, before very long, in our own local area, a group of believers who are, to all intents and purposes, ‘Replacement Army Recruits’, will also begin to build up. As that happens, I would want to be involved there too. Finally, on the ‘areas-of-service front’, I want to go on serving the Lord across the full spectrum of what that means. In the midst of all these activities, there will, no doubt, be time for dealing with questions arising from this book – but there won’t be *unlimited* time. I can’t see myself being able to send out individual letters and e-mails, as I did following “Custom and Command”.

A good friend has suggested a solution to this dilemma, which I think will be reasonably satisfactory all round. He has set up, on my behalf, a website on the inter-net, where I can answer questions that arise from the reading of this book. The website can be found at: www.remarkablereplacementarmy.com. Its main purpose will be to give answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs). As is the custom with most websites, I shall give priority to questions that I think will be of interest to a fair number of people. ‘Special Interest’ questions, especially if they are only raised by a solitary individual, may have to wait longer – and if they require a huge amount of research, regrettably, they might not get an answer at all (though they will be acknowledged on the website). Hopefully however, over

time, almost everyone who has an enquiry that genuinely relates to this book will receive a satisfactory answer.

My suggestion is that, if you have a question in mind, you look first at the website to see if there is already a relevant answer there. (At the very beginning, of course, there won't be any answers on it, because it will take time for questions to come in.) If you have a question that has not already been covered, please let me know about it. Opportunity is given, on the website, for typing in any questions that come to your mind. For my part, I shall try to keep up-dating the website, for as long as there are questions to answer.

I realise, of course, that not everyone has access to the internet. If that is *your* situation, I'm afraid the best I can do, this time round, is to ask you to try to find someone who *does* have internet access, and ask them to pose any question you have on your behalf. If necessary, I'm sure they will give you a print-out of the reply when it comes.

I commend the www.remarkablereplacementarmy.com website to you. I hope it will be a place where, for a while anyway, readers of this book can get answers to their questions, and can, if they want to, read additional thoughts on the future of the Church – thoughts that I already have, or thoughts that, as the situation develops, may form in my mind, inspired by the mystical mix of the Scriptures, the voice of the Spirit, and the on-going experience of life.

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There are a couple of other steps that authors can take, in order to supply readers with answers to questions that arise from their books. A second approach, for instance, is to call the attention of readers to any other material that he or she has written, which covers issues linked to the subject of the book they are now reading. In that connection, I feel it is important to point out that, in *“Custom and Command”*, there are five whole chapters on ‘Worship’.

“Custom and Command” can be read, free of charge, on several sites. For a number of years it has been on the website of a friend of mine, at www.hislife.co.uk; and I have now arranged for the full text to be put on the website that has been set up in connection with this present book (i.e. www.remarkablereplacementarmy.com). There are other sites also – some of which asked permission to use my work, and some of which didn't! (If you find my book on a ‘dodgy’ website, don't blame me!) “Custom and Command” is, of course, also available for purchase at www.lulu.com, for those who prefer to have an actual book in their hands. One way or another, it is not difficult to get a look at those five chapters on Worship, or indeed, at the whole book – which, incidentally, includes other themes you might find relevant.

Let me give you a very brief summary of the views expressed in these five chapters. (By the way, in “Custom and Command”, the opinions shared are shown to be very much based on the teaching and narratives of the Bible.) My over-all understanding is that worship is not the kind of activity that you can decide to engage in at a particular time, or in a particular place. It is, rather, a spontaneous response, from our inmost being, when it comes home to us that the grace of God has been at work in a particular situation. It can happen anywhere and anytime, but I don't think you can just turn it on, at set times and places! *Whenever something about God, or something He has done, causes you to express your appreciation – however you do it, spoken or unspoken, long or short – that is worship.*

To me, therefore, it is somewhat artificial to say something like: “We shall meet for worship at 10.30 on Sunday”; or even: “Next, in our gathering, we are going to have a time-of-worship”. Heartfelt appreciation, that wells up unbidden from deep within, may indeed flow from us as individuals, or even as a group, during a ‘service’, or a time of singing – but it is just as likely to arise when we are on our own, or with just a few others. It is just as likely to arise in the normal course of life, when something happens in our midst, that we recognise as the hand of God at work, or when, somehow, we get to know of His intervention in human circumstances. The worship I am describing is not an ‘Area of Service’ – not, basically,

something you ‘do’. Of course, your will is involved in giving God credit when credit is due. Even so, worship is not a performance, or something that can be pre-arranged.

You would really need to read the five chapters, and the wide range of biblical material they contain, to be properly convinced of this. I didn’t want to conclude this book, however, without some reference to this major facet of the Christian life.

* * * * *

The final step a writer can take – and, I believe, *must* take – is to admit that he doesn’t actually *have* all the answers! The Apostle Paul makes this quite clear in one of his most famous passages (1st Corinthians, Chapter 13). In verse 9 of that passage he writes: “We know *in part*, and we prophesy *in part*”; and, intellectual giant though he was, in verse 12 he insists that this applies to him personally: “I know *in part*”. Just in case we missed this admission of blanks-in-his-understanding, he writes in Philippians 3:10: “I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings...” but then goes on to say (verses 12 and 13): “Not that I have already obtained all this....I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.” Now, if that is how Paul feels, there is no place for any others, involved in Christian Teaching, to imagine that they ‘know it all’!

Happily, we don’t need to finish this chapter on the somewhat negative note that *all* our teachers have gaps in their knowledge! In another part of his writings, Paul reminds us of two important facts: 1) that God actually gives us *many* teachers, of various kinds, and 2) that, *between them*, there is the genuine possibility of getting near to what our Heavenly Father wants of us.

Look first at Ephesians 4:11: “He gave some to be apostles (travelling teachers), some to be prophets (bringing a ‘now’ word from the Lord), some to be evangelists (presenting teaching appropriate to those who are not yet believers), and some to be pastors-and-

teachers (the two words are linked: teachers who also keep a watchful eye on some individuals).” It could be argued that Paul is simply meaning that there is a whole bunch of teacher-types within the world-wide Church. However, if you think about it – what with various local preachers, visiting preachers, and Christian writers – there are quite a number of teaching-influences in the experience of most Christians.

What I am trying to get at, however, is the effect that a ‘miscellany of teachers’ can have on our growth as Christians. Look at what Paul wrote next. Having said that we have been given these various teachers, he tells us their purpose (Eph 4:12-13):

“to prepare God’s people for works of service...

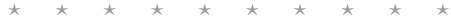
until we all reach unity...in the knowledge of the Son of God

and become mature,

attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

I repeat what I said before: *If we have a variety of teachers, there is the genuine possibility that, between them, they will be able to help us get near to what our Heavenly Father wants of us.*

There is something fundamentally unhealthy about believers who rely on a single ‘guru’ to guide their Christian lives. Of such an attitude, Paul writes: “You are still worldly...Are you not acting like mere men...when one says: ‘I follow Paul’, and another: ‘I follow Apollos’, (1st Corinthians 3:3-4). Of course it is sensible to look to someone whom we find helpful – someone who is able to explain matters in a way to which we can relate. However, I maintain that we need to look round for that kind of guidance from *various* people. As Proverbs 27:17 puts it: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”. Let us all have a number of teachers who each ‘sharpen’ the view of Christian discipleship that we get from the others.



What I have been saying in this chapter is simply this: If I haven't answered all the questions that have been raised in your mind and heart by reading this book, there are, basically, two things you can do. (Personally, I think you should do them both!) The first is to look at anything further on the issue that I have to say *elsewhere* – namely on the website I told you about, or in the booklet I wrote previously. The other thing is to read, or to listen to, *other people* who are exploring the same issues. You will need to impose, on each one of us would-be teachers, the same 'weighing' and double-checking that all prophecy and Bible-teaching should get – but if you do that, I am very confident that you will get a clear picture of the way ahead to which the Lord is calling you.

CHAPTER 37: I HAVE COME TO REALISE THAT THIS IS NOT A “PLAN B” IN GOD’S PURPOSES!

When I first started to look at the story of the Norwegian Resistance, I realised that, before the sudden enemy onslaught of the 1940s, the King of Norway had actually been reasonably satisfied with the basic form and lifestyle of the traditional Norwegian Army. As with most organisations, it had its weaknesses, and there do seem to have been several areas where it was in need of improvement. Nevertheless, it had served Norway well as a deterrent to troublemakers (from both outside and inside the country), and it had been of positive benefit to many citizens, in numerous difficult circumstances. So, it was clear to me that, when King Haakon set up his 'replacement army', it *wasn't* because he had any major reservations about how his existing army was constituted, or how it had tackled the work it had been given. His only reason for mobilising an alternative force was the emerging need for some different arrangements, and some different tactics, that would counteract the challenges of the new situation. The Resistance was a sort of “Plan B”.

Understandably, therefore, when I began to ask myself what specific lessons I should be learning from the Resistance story, I initially thought that the only reason Jesus must have, for setting up *His* 'Replacement Army', would be the need for a change of 'arrangements', and a change of 'tactics', so that the particular challenges of 'post-Christian' Western Society could be counteracted. In the early stages, I supposed that what I was writing in this book was a kind of “Plan B”, brought into operation by the King of Kings, as circumstances changed for His work on Earth.

It wasn't that I saw the Institutional Church as anything like

perfect. Like most concerned Christians, I had always known that there were features of Church-Life in need of *radical* improvement. At the same time, however, I had always acknowledged that there were many instances of good and godly work being done, in areas of the worldwide Church, as it had existed for generations. Consequently, in the very early days of looking at the parable, I assumed that, by and large, Jesus was reasonably satisfied with the *over-all form and lifestyle* of the Church. I had no doubts at all that there were definite changes He would want (changes that varied from denomination to denomination) but I still thought that the setting up of an alternative ‘Army of the Lord’ was a kind of “Plan B” from God – an all-wise response from Him, to what was happening in the World today.

As I worked through the writing of this book, however, I began to feel that there was no way the ‘Alternative Church’ that I was describing could be called a “Plan B”. Rather, I began to feel that the picture of the Church that was emerging as I considered the “parable” I had been given, was, in fact, very similar to the New Testament’s original picture of the Church. There were so many parallels between the attitudes and actions of the Norwegian Resisters, and the attitudes and actions commended in the New Testament, that *I became increasingly convinced that the form and lifestyle of the ‘Remarkable Replacement Army’ is the form and lifestyle that has always been intended, from the start of the Christian era, for the ‘Army of the Lord’ on Earth – the form and lifestyle that Jesus has always had in mind for His Church. I would now say, categorically, that this book is not about a “Plan B”!*

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Very shortly, I want to remind you, in a little more detail, of specific features that led me to that conclusion. Just before I do so, however, I believe we should look at the meaning of a Greek word that appears many times in the original version of the New Testament. It is the word that is almost always translated as “CHURCH”.

The Greek word I am talking about – written in a way that shows how it would be pronounced in English – is “ek-klay-sia”. (Often, it is represented as “ecclesia”.) Some readers, I know, will feel that the last thing they want is yet another ‘school-teacher-ish’ explanation of the derivation of a Greek word! May I ask you, though, to bear with me for just a little – because I am sure that we will be spared a lot of heartache, as the situation changes for the People of God in the Western Democracies, if we understand the original and basic meaning of this little New Testament word.

The *literal* meaning of ‘ek-klay-sia’ is: A CALLED-OUT GROUP. Looking at it, syllable by syllable, the ‘klay’ bit means ‘called’; ‘ek’ means ‘out’; and the ending conveys a number of persons – a group. Involved in its use there was always a sense of ‘purpose’, so you could say that the full meaning of the word was: “A Group of People Who, for Some Specific Purpose, Have Been Called-Out”.

I must make it clear that ‘ek-klay-sia’ (‘ecclesia’) could mean a group that had been called-out for any purpose – not just purposes connected with Almighty God. Even in the New Testament, it is used in that comprehensive way. In Acts 19:25-41, for example, we read that a silversmith in Ephesus, named Demetrius, had become angered because Paul’s preaching in the city had led to a dramatic drop in the sale of silver images of the goddess Diana. He gathered together (seemingly at some outdoor venue) a large group of his fellow silversmiths, and other workers in similar trades, and urged them to do something about the problem. Unfortunately, the workers got into a frenzy. The situation quickly got out of hand, and an important official had to step in to restore order. Will you notice, however, that this *riotous mob of people* is twice called an ‘ek-klay-sia’ by Luke, the writer of Acts! (Verses 32 and 41.) For these particular verses, translators don’t ever put ‘church’ – they put in a word such as ‘assembly’ – but it is *exactly* the same word as is normally translated ‘church’! I am telling you this so that you will see that, when the New Testament was written, its readers didn’t think of ‘ecclesia’ as a ‘holy meeting’, or a ‘holy building’, but simply as “A Group of People, Called-Out for a Purpose”.

Almost without exception, of course, Ek-klay-sia/Ecclesia is

translated as “church” in our Bibles. Nowadays, the word “church” raises images that go far beyond the basic one of a “Called-Out Group”. In particular, it can raise the image of a building, or the image of a ‘worship-service’ of one kind or another. It can also raise the image of a large organisation or institution, with all that that involves (e.g. “The Roman Catholic Church” or “The Church of England”). The word ‘ecclesiastical’, which derives from ‘ecclesia’, conjures up yet another set of images! In New Testament times, however, the image that ‘ecclesia’ would have raised would simply be “A Called-Out Group of People”.

It is true, of course, that ‘ecclesia’ is used, biblically, to refer both to the *universal* “Called-Out Group” (that had grown up in the Ancient World of the 1st Century) *and* to the various *local* “Called-Out Groups”. You should know, however, that I have looked closely at every mention of the word ‘ecclesia’ in the New Testament, and I cannot see any place in Scripture, at which I could not justifiably substitute the translation ‘Called-Out Group’ for the translation ‘Church’. Before we go any further, I think it is important that readers should be completely clear in their minds that, when the New Testament mentions the word “Church”, it simply means: “A Called-Out Group” – or, more fully: “A Group of People, Called-Out for a Purpose”.

* * * * *

Reading in the history books, I constantly sensed that the Norwegian Resisters were a “Group of People – Called-Out for a Purpose”. They had been called-out by the King of the country in which they lived, and their purpose was clear. They were to counteract the influence of the Nazi forces that occupied Norway, until the time came when he could return, and the restoration of the country could be brought about. More specifically, Haakon had a four-fold approach for them. As we have seen, he urged them to be a blessing to those round about them who were suffering in one way or another; to spread ‘Headquarters Truth’; to work towards the ‘sabotage’ of harmful installations; and to report situations with which HQ might be able to help.

Reading in the New Testament, I constantly sensed that the Early Church was a “Called-Out Group” in a very similar mould! The first Christians had been called-out by a King – by Jesus, the one God had appointed as King of Kings, and Lord of all the Earth. The New Testament makes it clear that their general aim was to counteract the influence of the ‘forces of evil’ that occupy the world, until the glorious time when the King of Kings will return, and the ‘restoration of all things’ (Acts 3:21) will be set in motion. It is also clear that Jesus also had a four-fold approach for his followers. He urged them to be a blessing to those who were suffering; to spread ‘Headquarters Truth’; to work towards the elimination of harmful features in society, and to bring to God, in prayer, every concern they might have for themselves and for others.

The ‘purpose’ that the King of Norway had for those who were loyal to him was backed-up by a fairly comprehensive ‘plan of action’ – a plan that was gradually revealed by Haakon and his colleagues, in those broadcasts that were reported in the underground newspapers. It soon became obvious that the King wanted a very different ‘army’ to the one that had served him previously. For instance, he wanted local Resistance groups, and individual resisters, to be directed by a Sent-Over Agent, rather than by the former military-style ‘chain of command’. Then again, he wanted care-of-the-needy to be – most of the time – personal and ‘on-the-spot’, rather than the highly-organised rescue-work that had been a feature of the ‘regular’ army. In fact, he aimed for a low-key (‘underground’) approach, rather than the kind of high-profile ‘exercises’ and ‘campaigns’ in which his previous Army had engaged. Furthermore, though he undoubtedly wanted the members of his ‘new force’ to inter-relate, he didn’t expect them to have barracks where they could gather together, or to connect other than informally. Neither did he expect that his new-style ‘troops’ would ever be ‘on parade’, and he certainly wasn’t looking for big public-demonstrations of popular support for himself. King Haakon had definitely changed his plan for the defence and well-being of his realm. He had introduced a ‘Plan B’.

All through this book, I have been trying to show you that the purpose of Jesus – for the Church of the Future – is *also*

backed up by a fairly comprehensive ‘plan of action’. I have been suggesting that the King of Kings, like the King of Norway, wants a very different ‘army’ to the one that, for many centuries, has been serving Him. I have been claiming, for instance, that He is looking for a force that is directed by the Holy Spirit, rather than one that is dominated by ‘human management’. I have been suggesting, also, that He wants care-of-the-needy to be very much more personal and ‘on-the-spot’, rather than being, almost exclusively, through organisations and projects and ‘initiatives’. My argument has been that He will be relying on a low-key, ‘underground’, approach, rather than the kind of high-profile ‘exercises’ and ‘campaigns’ in which his previous Army had engaged. (He will be content if we are like salt, scattered lightly but effectively over a plateful of food; or like leaven, which mixes with other ingredients, seemingly unnoticed, and yet leavens the whole lump.) I have also hinted that He will not need us to have times and places for worship, so long as we spontaneously show our heartfelt appreciation when something reminds us of the grace that comes to us ‘from above’. Finally, it has been my contention that, though He certainly wants us to relate to each other, He is perfectly happy if we do that informally, like any ordinary family.

All in all, the King of Kings, like the King of Norway, is looking for a very different ‘army’ from the one that has been serving Him in the past. With Jesus, however, there is no way in which this is a ‘Plan B’! What I have been saying, in the paragraph above, is, I believe, what the New Testament has been saying all along! I put it to you that what I have been describing has always been ‘Plan A’ for the Church – for the ‘Called-Out Group of God’! I am convinced that Jesus is calling us to get back to those aspects of Christian Lifestyle I have just been talking about – without forgetting the good features that *have* been maintained down through the ages.

The ground that has been covered, since the beginning of Part Three of this book, is – to my mind – all part of Almighty God’s “Plan A” for the Church, as it is revealed in the New Testament. If we start living in these things, we shall not only be responding appropriately to the new challenges of the present time, but we shall also be getting back to the full range of purposes that Jesus has for the ‘body’ that

represents Him here on Earth. We shall be reverting to the ‘Army of the Lord’, as it is portrayed in the Gospels, in Acts, and in the Epistles. We shall be reaching out to the original vision for God’s ‘Called-Out Group’.

* * * * *

Alongside these thoughts, however, it is necessary to issue a serious word of warning! No one should turn this into a boast, or ‘take the moral high ground’ because other Christians don’t – at the moment, at any rate – respond to the biblical teachings I have been laying before you. Jesus took a dim view of a man who said “Lord, I thank you that I am not as other men...I fast twice a week, and give a tenth of all I get.” (Luke 18: 11, 12.) The Lord reminded his hearers that people who thought in those self-satisfied terms were heading for a crash: “Everyone who exalts himself will be *humbled*.” (Verse 14.) So, if your mind-set is going to be something like this: “Lord, I thank you that I am not as other men...Unlike most Christians, I really care about my actual neighbours. By contrast with most of my fellow-believers, I do relate to ‘sinners’. What’s more, I don’t take orders from any man, only from the Holy Spirit” – you had better look out! Your Heavenly Father, because He has your best interests at heart, may humble you! The Apostle Paul writes: “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1st Corinthians 10:12.)

What applies to individuals, can also apply corporately. Sadly, the worldwide Church has always had ‘Called-Out Groups’ whose attitude has been: “Our way-of-doing-things is the way.” Alternatively, they might put it something like this: “Our Church is a *New Testament* Church. We are not like others, who are very casual about how they conduct church affairs. We really do base everything we do on the Scriptures.” The Apostle James thinks it is important to remind Christians of the Old Testament warning that God actually works *against* those who pat their own backs: “God *opposes* the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6; and Proverbs 3:34.) A little humility, about what we see as our response to God, goes a long way.

A pithy saying that I have sometimes heard is: “Every Christian is a ‘Work in Progress’”. It is based, I think, on Philippians 1:6: “He (i.e. God), who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion.” Paul wasn’t addressing an individual believer. He was addressing all the believers in Philippi. That means, surely, that God is working on *every* believer. Because someone is not responding to the teachings that you are currently responding to, can mean one of two things. It could, of course mean, that he, or she, is resisting God – but it could also mean that, at the moment, the Lord is working on something else in their lives. You are not the judge, anyway – so it’s probably best to give them the benefit of the doubt. (That very person, of whom you are tempted to disapprove, may wonder why *you* are not responding to something that is very clear to them!)

Let us avoid, altogether, comparing ourselves favourably with other believers. Nevertheless – to use the title of an old Christian book that is a devotional classic – let the motto of each of us be: “My Utmost for His Highest”. Let us all aim to find out as much as we can about God’s “Plan A” – for ourselves as individuals, and for “Called-Out Groups”, at the local level – and let us put into operation what we learn!

CHAPTER 38: A DEEPLY-DEVELOPED “DOUBLE-DEVOTION”

When I was about half way through my researches and investigations into the Norwegian Resisters, my over-all, and most lasting, impression of them was that, almost without exception, they had what I would describe as “a deeply-developed double-devotion”. *These folk were amazingly devoted in two directions – first of all, to their King; and then, equally, to their fellow-men-and-women.*

I noticed their “king-centredness” right away, in those early books that I read. Nowadays, many people view royal families with uncertainty. The fact remains, however, that, in the middle of last century, and especially during the Second World War, some monarchs were held in very high regard, certainly by their own countrymen. Haakon VII, for example, came to be immensely popular – viewed with genuine respect, trust and love. Many Norwegians were willing to go to great lengths on his behalf.

The more I learned about him, the better I was able to understand this devotion. Norway had peacefully separated from Sweden in 1905, and, as a prince of Denmark, Haakon had been invited to come and be King of the newly-formed country. From certain points-of-view, therefore, he was acknowledged as the creator of modern Norway, and many Norwegians had valued his ever-increasing participation in the development of their nation. Thus it was that, when he went into exile across the North Sea, after Hitler’s invasion – taking the government with him – most Norwegians accepted that this was the best way for opposition to Hitler to be conducted. Just four months after he left, he was already so popular that the Nazis made it a punishable offence to be in possession of complimentary material about him, or even of his photograph!

As the war got fully under way, and his wholehearted involvement in the Resistance effort became more widely known, Haakon's reputation was enhanced still further. In most countries on the continent of Europe, Resistance was not particularly 'royalist', even if there was a monarch. (Holland and Denmark were exceptions to that.) In Norway, however, the King was definitely acknowledged, by all but a few Communists, as the Head of the Resistance Movement. In conjunction with the Allied High Command, he worked tirelessly on behalf of the Resistance in his homeland, and for the support and encouragement of young Norwegian men who had escaped from Norway in order to join the Allied forces. (I remember reading somewhere – though I can't now trace the reference – that he made a point of having a personal chat with every one of those escapees!)

All in all, because of the part he had played, during his thirty-odd years in Norway itself, and because of his unstinting work on behalf of the Resistance when he was in exile, most Norwegian Resisters could say, without embarrassment: "I love my King – and I will do anything for Him".

That deep devotion to their King, on the part of the Resisters, was matched by an equal devotion to their fellow-men-and-women – to whoever was on the receiving-end of the enemy's damaging treatment. I have already shown you that many thousands of Resisters were hugely immersed in the people-centred activities of "Cross-My-Path Care", and "Keeping Citizens Informed of the Truth" – both of which areas of service they saw as just as important as the sabotage, or the spying, that is the somewhat more exciting face of the Resistance.

What I have *not* emphasised until now, however, is how incredibly demanding "Cross-My-Path Care", and "The Spread of Truth" actually was. Resisters had to share their already-meagre rations, and their already-cramped accommodation with those they were trying to shelter. Sometimes, they felt the need to give a financial contribution to those who were attempting to escape. Often they had to give up a lot of time, or a lot of sleep. (There were occasions, for example, when Resistance personnel had to wait all night, under cover of darkness, for a "para-drop" of supplies

from an allied aircraft). To be realistically helpful to victims of oppression, there was much strenuous physical work to be done: cleverly disguised hiding-places to be constructed; identity papers to be painstakingly forged; nursing to be maintained (never an easy task); exhausting 'delivery rounds' to be made, in order to get underground newspapers into people's hands; escapees to be accompanied on arduous sections of their escape-route. Aspects of all this may sound glamorous or romantic, but the tasks the resisters were called upon to do usually involved hard grind, and personal sacrifice.

We must also remember that almost every part of this was done against a backdrop of extreme danger. The Gestapo were everywhere. One false step, in any of these activities, and Resisters could be on their way to torture, or concentration camp, or even immediate death. It would have been so easy to opt out – not necessarily collaborating with the enemy, but neither making any real contribution to the Resistance work.

In spite of the deprivations and the dangers, most Resisters in Norway (and elsewhere in occupied Europe) appear to have had an almost unbelievably selfless attitude. Their mindset seemed to be: *A fellow human-being is suffering under enemy oppression. I will not allow this. I will help him or her – no matter what the cost to myself.*

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I had been told to observe these Resistance people closely, as a parable for my Christian life. So, once I realised that they were characterised by this "deeply-developed double-devotion", I began to put some searching questions to myself. Firstly, I asked: "Am I deeply devoted to Jesus, *my* King, and am I truly prepared to do anything He asks?" Secondly, I pondered: "Is *my* devotion to others, of anything like the same quality as the devotion-to-others that the Resisters showed?"

My initial answers to those questions were rather disappointing! (I'm afraid that the next few paragraphs are going to be somewhat negative – but don't lose heart! They will set the scene for a positive and encouraging conclusion to the chapter.)

I knew that it would not be totally unreasonable for me to claim that I 'loved' Jesus. I *did* have enthusiasm for Him, and genuine warmth towards Him. Every now and then, however, in my Resistance reading, I would come across sincere declarations of warmth and enthusiasm for King Haakon, which, somehow, put me to shame. Then again, each time I thought about what Jesus called the "First Commandment", I felt that my 'love' for Him was, in fact, rather weak. His teaching was, you remember: "Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your mind, and with *all* your strength." (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27.) Since He also taught: "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30), I knew that this all-encompassing love should be for Him, as well as for Almighty God. Somehow, compared with the lofty words of the "First Commandment", my love for Jesus, though it certainly existed, seemed feeble. (I suspect that many of *you*, also, may feel that your response to the first 'First Commandment' is somewhat feeble.)

That feeling of 'feebleness' was just as true of my devotion to my fellow-men-and-women. During this time of self-examination, I felt that, if a written report had been made on my 'Neighbour Love', the phrase "Could have done much better" would undoubtedly have appeared somewhere on it! Once again, the report would not have been altogether blank. I dare to think that there would have been *some* positive 'entries' there. Nevertheless, it was glaringly obvious to me that, for sheer sacrificial caring-about-others, I wasn't in the Resisters' league at all, not by a long chalk! What I described earlier as the 'Resistance mindset' – "A fellow human-being is suffering, under 'enemy' oppression. I will not allow this. I will help him or her, no matter what the cost to myself" – certainly wasn't *my* daily mindset.

What Jesus identified as "the second Great Commandment" – Love your Neighbour as Yourself – is also relevant here. Most people

give a lot of attention to caring for themselves. That's fair enough! There are no prizes for "letting yourself go". There's something sad about people who don't bother to keep their heads well above water in the various aspects of life. Jesus obviously appreciates that normal people will make a strenuous effort if they sense they are slipping under in one or more areas of life. However, when He says: "Love your neighbour *as yourself*", He is instructing us to make the same strenuous efforts, on behalf of others, if we see *them* slipping under in any way, as we make for ourselves in similar circumstances. I knew full well that, though I might occasionally approach that standard, it certainly wasn't the hallmark of my life! (Once again, I think it is highly possible that some of you might feel the same!)

Let me sum-up this discouraging (though temporary) phase that I went through, in the middle of the writing of this book. There was a point when I became so challenged by the deep commitment of the Norwegian Resisters to their fellow-men-and-women – as well as by their steadfast devotion to their King and his cause – that I began to think that I was being unrealistic to expect the 'parable' to be a help to other Christians, except, perhaps, to a very few 'super-heroes'. Personally (at that particular stage) I felt that the parable was condemning me, rather than encouraging me! Not unsurprisingly, therefore, I began to question whether, after all, it was worth bringing the story of "The Remarkable Replacement Army" to the attention of my fellow-believers.

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Wonderfully, just at the time when it seemed as if all my investigations into the 'parable' were going to be of no value, I came across some words of Paul that changed my outlook! In his letter to the Philippians, we find him writing: "Not that I have already obtained all this...but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me...Forgetting what is behind, and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal...for which God has called me." (Phil. 3:12-14.)

It dawned on me that, even though the lifestyle revealed by the 'parable' was not something I had 'already obtained', I didn't have to view it as a criticism. I could view it, rather, as something to aim at – something to become increasingly involved-with. Paul's words seemed to say: "Just press on – to take hold of more and more of what the Lord is calling you to!"

I started, therefore, to think of myself as a definite recruit in Christ's Replacement Army. To begin with, I concentrated on the limited, and more down-to-earth, aim of devotion to my fellow-men-and-women. Of course, I constantly sought the guidance of the Lord, through His Spirit, in my interactions with others – but I didn't specifically aim at a greater devotion to my King. I wasn't at all sure, at that particular juncture, how a deeper love for Jesus could be achieved, except by continuing the well-tried practices of quietly fellowshiping with Him, and of getting to know Him better and better through His Written Word. At the conscious level, I saw my purpose simply as serving others, in Jesus name, across the full spectrum of what I have been describing in this book.

A number of years have now passed since I launched into this alternative Christian lifestyle. I *still* don't consider that I have fully taken hold of what the parable (and the New Testament) teaches about our attitude to our fellow-men-and-women. I am not yet as passionate about those in any kind of need as the Resisters were. The quality of my concern is not yet the same as theirs was. *But I'm working on it. I'm moving in that direction.* Thanks to the parable, I am valuing a great deal of scriptural advice that I have neglected, or ignored, in times past. Thanks to the parable, I have been stimulated to a much more people-centred lifestyle.

Concentrating on the fellow-men-and-women aspect, of the 'Double Devotion' that the parable recommends, has had an unexpected 'side effect'! Through doing that, I have actually learned to love my King more, and to be more deeply devoted to Him!

This can be very easily explained by a further reference to the Resistance parable. I told you that, at the beginning of the Second World War, Haakon VII, after starting to live in Norway more than

thirty years previously, was already well-loved. This was mainly because of what people had *read* about him – what they had read in newspapers, or magazines, or in various books that were published about the Norwegian Royal Family. (It was, after all, a bit of a novelty: the first Royal Family that Norway had had for four hundred years!) In the earlier part of Haakon's reign, radio was only beginning to appear, and there was no television there till the 1950s, so reading material was the principal way of contact for most citizens. Some people, of course, had actually met the King face-to-face, and had experience of his impact on their lives. This was true, for example, of members of the Armed Forces (of which Haakon was the active 'Commander-in-Chief). By and large, however, his popularity was based on what people had read.

During the Nazi Occupation, all that changed – especially among the Resisters. As the men and women of Haakon's 'Replacement Army' launched themselves into the work for which they had been 'called out', they began to appreciate the King a great deal more than they had done before. They began to realise that, in no small measure, it was thanks to *his* untiring work at Allied Headquarters, that the cries-for-help that they sent were heard; that appropriate resources to deal with their problems were supplied; that wisdom about tricky issues (such as escape routes) was available. They had plenty of proof that the King was very much behind the fact that people were being rescued and re-habilitated; that evil was being counteracted, and that good was often able to flourish even in very hostile environments. Consequently, as the days passed, their enthusiasm for their King – their genuine *love* – grew and grew.

I myself seem to have gone through very similar stages of love for *my* King. In the days when I was involved in the 'traditional' "Army of the Lord", of course there were aspects of my experience that caused me to love Him. When I learned something new about Him in the Bible, when I spent time in His presence, and when I saw Him at work, a loving response sprang up spontaneously in my heart.

Since I launched into Christ's 'Replacement Army', however, I can honestly say that my love has been *further* stimulated! I am

still inspired, when I learn something new about Jesus in the pages of God's Word, or have an encounter with Him in the stillness. Nevertheless, now that I am more involved than ever in 'real-life' personal situations, I seem to see Him at work more and more. I am getting ever-increasing proof that "*He is able to make all grace abound*" (2nd Corinthians 9:8), and that "*He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.*" (Ephesians 3:20.) Signs that He really loves us, and that He loves those we bring to His attention, come increasingly to my notice, and, as a consequence, my love for Him grows and grows.

To those of you who are standing, hesitatingly, on the brink of launching yourselves into the Replacement Army of the King of Kings, I would say: Don't let the "High Calling", that is emphasised by the Resistance Parable, hold you back. As you get more deeply involved in His plan for your future, you will find that there gradually develops, within you, an ever-deeper devotion, both to your fellow-men-and-women on Earth, and to your Heavenly King.

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The next chapter is the penultimate chapter of this book. It contains further strong encouragement for the way ahead.

CHAPTER 39: YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!

One of the most remarkable features of the Resistance Saga is that some of the most *unexpected* people were able to play a full and significant part in what happened. Being a Resister was by no means limited to James-Bond-type males, and 'feisty' females – though such people were most welcome, and had a very real contribution to make! There are, however, thousands of stories – not only from Norway, but also from every occupied country in Europe – of people responding to situations in ways that, before the War, neither they, nor anyone else, would have thought possible! Some of the most daring deeds of sabotage were accomplished by individuals who had, previously, been considered rather timid. Then again, frail old ladies with their shopping bags, and young boys and girls on their bicycles, fearlessly distributed banned literature, to homes in the districts where they lived. Inveterate chatterboxes managed to give nothing away when cruelly interrogated by the Gestapo. Families who, before the Occupation, had seemed snobbish and self-obsessed to their neighbours, sheltered escapees in their homes, and became unbelievably generous to all kinds of waifs and strays. I was going to say that many people acted 'out of character' – but it is probably more accurate to say that they acted 'beyond character'. Contrary to what might have been expected, they turned out to 'have what it takes'!

There are two main explanations put forward for this phenomenon. The first explanation is that those who became Resisters had *always had* these seemingly 'new-found' characteristics deep within them – but the characteristics had only come to the surface in the challenging circumstances of the Occupation. (It is certainly true that, at many points in history, adverse conditions have "brought out the best" in people.)

The other explanation suggests that the experience of being plunged into a vastly different lifestyle (the Nazi Occupation)

was so ‘cataclysmic’ for many people, that a *completely new* set-of-characteristics was created within them, in addition to what they already had – in much the same way, for instance, as being subjected to intense heat can produce additional properties in physical elements. The drama of being under the thumb of hostile forces, though outwardly it might not have seemed to affect them much, *inwardly* changed them completely. In one way, they were still ‘themselves’; but in another way, they were new people!

Now, it doesn’t really matter which of these explanations is correct. Perhaps it varied from person to person. I only mention them because of a staggering revelation (similar to the *second* explanation above) that appears in the Bible. The New Testament teaches that to commit oneself to Christ is, in fact, a dramatic experience – even when, outwardly, it seems quite low-key. Furthermore, when people go through that particular experience, something ‘life-changing’ takes place. They receive an *additional set-of-characteristics* (besides those they started off with) – characteristics that are fully suited to any situations they will face, as followers of Jesus.

This teaching has very important ramifications for those of us who are contemplating ‘service’ in the Replacement Army of the King of Kings. It means that we will definitely “have what it takes” for such a lifestyle! We will be in a position to act “beyond character”, whatever challenges we might encounter!

* * * * *

The New Testament uses a variety of phrases to talk about our innate set-of-characteristics, and this extra set-of-characteristics that is formed within us when we become Christians. Sometimes, for instance, it talks, in the original Greek, about ‘the *Old Man*’ and ‘the *New Man*’ – terms for which modern translations tend to substitute ‘the Old Nature’ and ‘the New Nature’, or ‘the Old Self’ and ‘the New Self’. (I’ll direct your attention to specific passages in the Scriptures in a moment.) The ‘Old Nature’ is the nature we are born with – our human nature. It may well have some good

qualities, but it has been corrupted. In fact, the New Testament describes it as “a sinful nature”. The New Nature is more like a blending of our basic personalities with the Spirit of God – a Christ-like version of our selves. In contrast with our ‘human nature’, it is described as a ‘divine nature’ within us!

The two ‘natures’, by the way, are seen as co-existing. Although there is the occasional verse that some people have interpreted to mean that the Old Nature is now completely inactive, and has been fully replaced the New, the weight of Scripture, and our personal experience, supports the unfortunate truth that these two natures are still to be found, in every one of us. This means that we have to direct our attention, positively, to living in the New Nature, and make every effort to disregard the Old Nature. We are warned, however, that the Old Nature will constantly try to assert itself, so we shall have to be firm, and keep on following the inclinations of the New.

Let me give you some of the passages from the New Testament that make me confident of this astounding ‘doctrine’: “You were taught...to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires...and to put on the new self, created to be like God, in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22, 24.) “You have taken off your old self, with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed...in the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:9-10.)

The Apostle Peter, instead of using the terms ‘new self’, or ‘new nature’, uses the term ‘divine nature’. His exact words are: “Jesus our Lord...has given us great and precious promises, so that...we may participate in the *divine nature*, and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (1 Pet. 1:2 and 4.) What he is trying to do, I think, is to emphasize that our ‘new nature’ is, as I said earlier, “a blending of our basic personalities with the Spirit of God – a Christ-like version of our selves”.

Jesus Himself very much suggests that our beings can be ‘indwelt’ by Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In John’s Gospel, chapter 14, we find Him saying: “If anyone loves me...my Father will love

him, and *we* will come to him, and make our home with him.” (Verse 23.) Moments earlier, He had been talking about the Holy Spirit in a similar fashion: “He lives with you, and will be in you.” (Verse 17.)

In Romans Chapter 8, Paul contrasts your ‘*sinful nature*’ (with its serious failings) and your ‘*spirit*’. About the former, he says: “Those who are controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” (Verse 8.) Shortly after, he makes it clear that by your ‘*spirit*’ he means the inner part of the Christian that is united with the divine: “*If Christ is in you...your spirit is alive.*” (Verse 10.) In the very next verse, he refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, rather than the presence of Jesus: “He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through His Spirit who lives in you.” I don’t think we need to be confused about whether it is Father, Son or Holy Spirit who indwells our spirits. The important thing is that, though we can’t do much about our ‘*sinful nature*’ (except tinker about with it, and make some minor adjustments) we can turn confidently to our ‘*spirit*’, because that is the part that has been invaded by the divine.

Inside each Christian, then, there is (at one and the same time) a natural-style Self, and a Jesus-Style Self! To their amazement, the Resisters found, that, though there was a part of them that was definitely *not* up to what lay ahead, there was a part of them that *was* equal to the challenging tasks that faced them. Similarly, we “Recruits of the Replacement Army” are going to find that there is a part of us – our ‘*spirit*’, or our ‘*new self*’, or our ‘*new nature*’ – which, because it has been transformed by the presence of the divine, *is* equal to the challenging tasks that face us!

* * * * *

Just because many of the Resisters seemed like “new people” to those who had known them well before the War, it doesn’t mean that they didn’t have trouble with their natural instincts. Former Resisters, who have given honest accounts of their ‘*adventures*’, often comment on how normal human inclinations – both for

perfectly legitimate things like comfort, or security, or family life, as well as for more ‘*dodgy*’ desires like revenge, and personal success and recognition – tempted them to divert from what they knew was the right thing to do in various Resistance situations. They had to be very firm in ignoring the promptings, within them, of their ‘*Ordinary Selves*’, and turn, rather, to the promptings of their ‘*Resistance Selves*’. Time and time again, we, too, will have to “put off the old self” and “put on the new self”.

It would be lovely to think that ‘*putting off the old self*’ could be a ‘*one-off!*’ Particularly when I was a pastor in a university city, I used to have students coming to me, and more-or-less ‘*complaining*’ that, although they had wholeheartedly given their lives to Christ, they still had various types of “*wrong urges*”. They would point me to verses like: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2nd Corinthians 5:17), and ask me what had gone wrong for them! Obviously, there were various lines of discussion that had to be followed up. Among other things, however, I always tried to tell them about the co-existence of the ‘*old nature*’ and the ‘*new nature*’, and to encourage them to make it their aim to “*live in their new nature*”. I would try not to forget to point out that we are a ‘*new creation*’ because the presence of a ‘*new nature*’ within us has made us very different people from the ones we were previously. Our potential for living as God wants us to live, is so much greater than before.

A slightly corny simile I occasionally used, among the students, was this: “It’s like someone who takes on twins as his personal assistants. They have similarities, but they are by no means identical. One is often great fun to have around, and it doesn’t cost the boss much to employ him. When it comes to the bit, however, he is pretty useless, and the boss often has a difficult job to clear up messes that he has left behind. The other twin is also, sometimes, fun to be with – but he is of a more serious nature, and, because he is the better qualified, he costs more. Nevertheless, he really gets things done. Most wise employers would get into the habit of choosing the second twin each time they were confronted with a task. In the same way, Christians must get into the habit of choosing their ‘*New Man*’ rather than their ‘*Old Man*’. The ‘*Old*

Man' will, in some form or other, be with us till we enter Eternity, but the more we ignore him, the less effective he will be in our lives."

I do accept that some people have a harder struggle than others to avoid temptation. It would seem that, often through no apparent fault of their own, they are landed with 'natures' that make it more difficult for them, than for others, to walk in God's ways. I can't go along with the modern trend of attributing absolutely every aspect of human behaviour to our 'genes' – as if there was no such thing as human responsibility. At the same time, some people do appear to have more stacked against them than do others.

I am glad, therefore, that one of the aspects of 'Headquarters Truth' that we can pass on to anyone at all, when we see it is appropriate, is this: Our Heavenly Father responds to sincere commitment-to-Christ by the giving of a 'new nature' – a Jesus-like nature that is fully able to rise to any challenge that might come your way.

For Christians, of any persuasion, who have not fully realised the extent of their inheritance in Christ, I would echo the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:16-18: *"I pray that... He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...And I pray that ...you grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...and that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*

To Christians, of any persuasion, who *have* realised all this, but have not persevered in living in it, I would personally say (mixing in some sentiments of Paul's that I quoted in the previous chapter): *"Forget what is behind! Start again – and live in the New Nature that has been in you since you first came to Christ! Press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of you! Press on towards the goal for which God has called you!"*

Finally, let me give my fellow-recruits to the Replacement Army of the King of Kings these words from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (Chapter 9, verse 8): *"God is able to make all grace*

abound to you, so that, in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

YOU HAVE GOT WHAT IT TAKES!

CHAPTER 40: THE ULTIMATE FUTURE - AND THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE!

This last chapter of my book is going to focus on the final scenes of the 'Drama' of the Norwegian Resistance of the 1940s – the closing happenings in the saga that was given to me as a parable (or an allegory) for the lifestyle of Christians from now on. There are three separate lessons that seem to flow from these final scenes...

1. We Should Never Stop Being Encouraged by the Glorious Ending of the Story!

On 7th June, 1945, Haakon VII, after five long years in exile, returned to Norway, and to an ecstatic welcome, both in Oslo, where he landed, and all over the country. During the previous months, Nazi forces in Europe had, at last, been totally overwhelmed by the mega-army of the Allies, and Hitler had taken his own life. The years of enemy domination had finally come to an end. When King Haakon set foot on Norwegian soil once again, the citizens of his beautiful-but-battered land realised that, after the darkness, a 'New Dawn' had come.

All through the War, the King of Norway had promised that he would return, and that, when he did, he would initiate work on the creation of a 'New Norway' – a Norway that would be free from the many injustices and sorrows of the period that had just ended. Haakon, and those of his colleagues who had joined him in broadcasts to the nation (so faithfully reported in the underground newspapers), had consistently maintained that this would be how things would end – and that was, indeed, what happened. On the day the King returned, the Story of the Resistance ended, and a completely new period of Norwegian History was ushered in.

That is, of course, *exactly* the picture that our ‘collection of underground newspapers’ – the Bible – paints, concerning what lies ahead in World History! Old Testament and New Testament figures alike, and not least Jesus himself, consistently maintain that the King of Kings will one day return to His beautiful-but-battered World, and a “New Heaven and a New Earth” will be created – free from injustice and sorrow. When Jesus returns, the Story of the ‘Church’ (the Story of the Worldwide ‘Called-Out Group’, the Story of ‘Resistance to Evil’) will be over, and a glorious Eternity will be ushered in.

(Some Christians, apparently, find all this difficult to believe. It seems much too good to be true! Personally – because I have found God’s promises for this present life to be so wonderfully reliable – I believe, and rejoice in, His promises for the life that is to come!)

Let us remind ourselves of some of those biblical promises about the ultimate future. Jesus’ clear words to his disciples at the beginning of John Chapter 14 – “Let not your hearts be troubled...*I will come back*” (Verses 1-3) – are backed up by many of his statements about the “*Coming of the Son of Man*”. (If you want to, you can look up Matthew 16:27, 24:27, 24:30, 24:36, 24:44, 25:31 and 26:64; or Mark 8:38; or Luke 12:40 and 21:27.) Further on in the New Testament we find words like these: “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come back*.” (Acts 1:11.) “We wait for the blessed hope – *the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*.” (Titus 2:13.) “He who testifies to these things (i.e. Jesus) says: ‘*Yes, I am coming soon*.’” (Revelation 22:20.) (That particular verse is the second-last verse of the entire Bible.)

There are many re-assurances, too, that His “Second Coming” will usher in a glorious era, free from injustice and sorrow – free from everything that mars human experience. In Acts 3:21, we find Peter speaking of Jesus in these terms: “He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to *restore everything*, as He promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

The ‘holy prophets’ (Old Testament figures) actually have quite

a lot to say about what will be involved in this ‘restoration of all things’. For example: “I will create a new heaven and a new earth... Never again will there be an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years...They will not toil in vain, or bear children doomed to misfortune...The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox...They will neither harm nor destroy...says the Lord.” (Isaiah 65: 17,20,23,25); or “They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. Every man will sit under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, and no-one will make them afraid – for the Lord Almighty has spoken.” (Micah 4:3-4.)

Getting back to the New Testament, the Apostle Peter wrote: “In keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” (2nd Peter 3:13) – and who can fail to be greatly uplifted by John’s vision in Revelation: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away...He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new’...These words are trustworthy and true.” (Rev: 21: 1,4,5.)

It seems that many writers, nowadays, steer clear of ‘happy endings’. Many readers, apparently, despise such a conclusion to a book. In real life, however, everyone hopes for happy endings to all the ‘stories’ in which they are personally involved (and, if they are charitable, to everyone else’s stories as well). I want you to know that this book has a ‘happy ending’ – because both the Story of the Church, and the Story of the World (in spite of all that has happened, in each of them, along the way) finish in a wonderfully satisfactory way. *Unashamedly, then, let us rejoice in this ‘happy ending’ – this glorious prospect of how things will finally work out!*

2. We must not, however, let the bright promise of the Ultimate Future blind us to the challenges of the Immediate Future.

The story of opposition to the Nazi regime in 1940s Norway was in two parts. Opposition was *first* offered by the King of

Norway's (regimental-style) 'Original Army'. That had some highly commendable aspects to it, but it was not suited to the full demands of the situation. Consequently, a new phase developed. Opposition was *then* offered by the King of Norway's (much less 'structured') 'Replacement Army'.

It seems to me, now, that the story of opposition to the 'forces of evil', led by the King of Kings, is also in two parts. For many centuries, opposition has been offered by an 'Army of the Lord' that could be described as 'regimental' in style – the Institutional Church. As we move into the second decade of the 21st Century, however, I believe we have come to the point where a 'new phase' is developing in the Story of the Church. One of the key 'messages' of this book is that we have reached a time when the King of Kings is mobilising a non-institutional (a much more informal) 'Replacement Army' to oppose and counteract the 'forces of evil'. The struggle is by no means over! There is still a great deal to be achieved!

The period of war during which King Haakon was served, in Norway, by his 'Original Army' was very short. By comparison, the period he was served by his 'Replacement Army' was long. In the cosmic scenario, however, the period during which the King of Kings has been served by the 'Institutional Church' has lasted for many centuries. Perhaps, in this case, the period served by the 'Informal Church' will be shorter – possibly even much shorter. I cannot, however, make any sure comment on that, one way or the other. What I do proclaim is this: The Era of the Institutional Army-of-the-Lord is drawing to a close. The Era of the Replacement Army has already begun – and it will be an era full of challenge and opportunity.

I have made it plain of course, that, in the light of the Scriptures, I believe Jesus (unlike the King of Norway) has *always* wanted the informal-style 'Army' that I have been describing. I don't think, however, that you need to spend time debating that issue, unless you want to. My real concern is that Christians should see that the lifestyle that has been the subject of this book is the lifestyle that is urgently needed for the immediate future.

Some Norwegians (and I can understand their point-of-view) were tempted, by King Haakon's glowing promises about the ultimate future, to 'batten down the hatches', and 'lie low' till the nightmare was over. (I think some Christians adopt that attitude also. They definitely have faith and hope – but they have forgotten that we need to have love also, and there are many situations, 'out there', in desperate need of love!) In the 1940s situation, sooner or later, most Norwegians who felt any kind of loyalty to their King, and what he stood for, got involved in some way in the Resistance. I don't want any Christian to change his or her mind-set from 'Institutional Church' to 'Replacement Army', until they are convinced that that is the call of God on their lives. At the same time, I firmly believe that no sincere Christian can 'lie low till the nightmare is over'. *By all means, then, let us rejoice in Christ's promises about the ultimate future, and cherish them in our hearts – but let us rise to the challenges of the immediate future.*

3. The fact that remarkable parallels have continued – right-to-the-end – should make us take the "Allegory" that has been the subject of this book, very seriously!

Quite a few years have passed since the Story of the Norwegian Resisters was first brought to my attention. Nevertheless, I am still 'wowed' by the number of metaphors and analogies for the Christian Life that have come to me from it! Somehow, the similarities between the ending of the power of the occupying forces in Norway, and the ending of the power of the 'forces of evil' in our World, are, for me, a *final* confirmation – if a final confirmation is needed – that there has been something remarkable about the 'Resistance Parable'. To me, the connections are 'uncanny'. I still can't get over how helpful the story is as an 'extended parable' (or an 'allegory') for the Christian Life. I hope that most of my readers – even if they don't accept every conclusion I have drawn from it – will accept that this 'parable', or 'allegory' deserves some quite serious consideration, as we go into the future.

Will you notice however, that I am calling it nothing more than a 'parable' or an 'allegory'. *I am not calling it a 'blueprint', or a 'model'.* Blueprints and models are designed to be copied more or less exactly

– and that is very far from what I have in mind. Jesus says that the movement of the Spirit among us is like the wind, which blows wherever it pleases, so that you cannot predict exactly how it will blow. (See John 3:8). Even though we may be able to draw up some general principles from the Word of God, the Spirit will not produce a series of exact replicas, either in individual Christian lives, or in the life of groups of Christians. Consequently, it is only possible to give a general impression of what the Worldwide Church, or any local church, or even the life of an individual believer, will be like. I might call this book an *‘impressionist painting of the Christian lifestyle’*, but I certainly wouldn’t call it a ‘blueprint’ or a ‘model’.

It is worth remembering that, on many different occasions, Jesus used the phrase “The Kingdom of God is like...” – but each time He used a *different* comparison! That says to me that He is not into exact blueprints. He preaches a ‘lifestyle’, but He gives us *various* metaphors to help us grasp that lifestyle. It’s the same with the New Testament’s teaching on ‘The Church’. It compares the Church to a Body, to a Family, to a Building, to a Nation, to a Priesthood, and even to an Army. It doesn’t insist on one ‘model’. It points to a lifestyle, and gives you various similes and metaphors that help you to understand what the Lord wants of you.

The purpose of this book has been to point to a lifestyle – a ‘non-institutional’ lifestyle (a Church Lifestyle, but not a ‘Churchy’ Lifestyle). No doubt numerous comparisons and metaphors can be used, and will be used, to help us focus on that lifestyle. I think that the Norwegian Resistance is one such comparison, or metaphor, or simile, or illustration. I don’t think it is the only one that will emerge (or has already emerged), but I do think it is a worthy one. In fact, I have come to believe that it is a ‘God-Given’ one, and, as such, it shouldn’t be taken lightly!

If you want a blueprint, lay hold of these words that I wrote in a previous chapter: LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD – AND OTHER PEOPLE – GUIDED BY THE WORD, AND THE SPIRIT. That has always been the ‘blueprint’ for Christians. The purpose of this book has merely been to give you a biblical impression of areas in which you might be called upon to serve, and sources you might look-to

for the strength and wisdom to do it.

I am not urging any Christian to ‘join’ a Resistance-like Denomination. I am urging every Christian – once they are, as the New Testament puts it, ‘fully convinced in their own minds’ (Romans 14:5) – to adopt a Resistance-like Lifestyle. Denominations ‘clone’ people, but a Lifestyle allows of numerous permutations and variations and distinctions. The story of every Norwegian Resister, and of every local group, was refreshingly different. So it should be with us! *Brothers and Sisters among the People of the King! I believe Jesus is calling you to an Alternative Lifestyle - a lifestyle that is, however, deeply biblical. This book is a parable of that Lifestyle.*

* * * * *

I am going to conclude by repeating the prophecy I gave at the end of Chapter Three. I could, of course, simply ask you to look back at the relevant pages, but I am totally convinced that that prophecy was a particular ‘Word of the Lord’ to us all, and it seems best to end on that note...

I prophesy that the existing regiments of the Army of the King-of-Kings (the various denominations and “streams” which currently make up the Church) are going to disintegrate, sooner or later, during the 21st Century. Already I see many signs of that. Furthermore, although there are individual churches, and groups of churches, which at the moment are, to all intents and purposes, “fighting well”, I suggest that even they, in the long run, will all but disappear from the scene. I prophesy that the days of the Institutional Church are drawing to a close.

I do not believe, however, that the King-of-Kings is discouraged – even though many Christians view the deteriorating situation with dismay. I am sure that He has

known all along that these organisations are not constituted to withstand the end-time onslaughts of the forces-of-evil. At the same time, there is no way that He will leave Himself without a body of “soldiers of Christ” to further His cause on Earth.

My prediction is that, as the 21st Century unfolds, the King-of-Kings will come to be represented by an Army of a radically different style from the Army which has previously represented Him. I prophesy that He will replace His formal Army (His formal Church) with an informal network of dedicated believers – a veritable “resistance movement” of committed Christians.

This ‘Replacement Army’ will have its beginnings in the many faithful ‘soldiers-in-waiting’ who have already moved away from their institutionalised churches and are, at this very time, eagerly looking to see what their Lord and Commander wants of them next. As time goes on, they will be joined by more and more of their fellow-Christians from within the declining churches, and also by new Christians drawn from among the so-called ‘unchurched’.

In this new set-up, there will be no church buildings, and no division between “clergy” and “laity” (or whatever you like to call that very real two-tier system which always seems to develop in church circles). Such a change will not, however, result in believers who refuse to be ‘under authority’ – people who are just ‘doing their own thing’. It will result, rather, in believers who have discovered, in depth, what the Bible means by its frequent references to Christians being “led by the Spirit”. God will, without question, continue to use role-models, and people of helpful influence. Nevertheless, I prophesy that Heaven’s own “Special Agent” – the Holy Spirit

– will be the key figure in every locality.

As with the Norwegian Resistance, the Church of the Future will be something of a “Secret Army” – low-profile but high-achieving. It will not have the public visibility which the Church has enjoyed in many parts of the World in past centuries. Nevertheless, as with the Resistance, fellow-citizens will quickly realise that earnest followers-of-the-King are in their midst. The work of Christ’s “Replacement Army” will be done almost entirely in ‘undercover operations’, by individuals or by small groups, normally working just where they are, within the setting of their everyday lives. But I prophesy that it will be effective work – work which will bring joy and satisfaction to the Lord, and much blessing and deliverance, of one kind or another, to many needy people.

*In due course, the glorious day will come when, backed by a mega-force which is beyond our imaginings, the Lord of Hosts will return to His World. Then, at last, Evil will get its final come-uppance, and the ‘Restoration of All Things’ will be accomplished. I do not know when that will be, but my over-all prophesy is this: **WHETHER IT BE LONG OR SHORT, THE CLOSING ERA OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WILL BE THE ERA OF THE “REPLACEMENT ARMY”.***

* * * * *

I believe that a call-with-a-difference is sounding out from the King of Kings in these days. It is a call to get back to original ways of serving Him – ways that are simple and basic, and yet, at the same time, are highly appropriate for what lies ahead. Do you hear that call? Will you respond to it?

I believe that the Lord is saying, with a new urgency, words that He has said in many situations in the past:

“WHOM SHALL I SEND? AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?”

My prayer is that many will answer...

“HERE AM I, LORD. SEND ME.”

