

Three Letters of the late G. V. Wigram

G. V. Wigram.

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1

My dear -,

We naturally look for fruit such as we can present, as it were, on our table before the Lord; but He seeks rather that which can be in His presence on high, and a testimony that will abide through eternity (2 Cor. 2: 14-16). Doubtless, it is sweet to see fruits gathered, and, like grapes of Eshcol, fit, when fresh, for man's refreshment; and good when dried: good in either case to show the goodness of God in the fruits of the culture of a good land. But besides this, He is pleased to use His word as the savour of death unto death, and to vindicate His own grace in the bad use man makes of it. The seed of the sower was used to detect world, flesh, and devil, as well as to bring forth fruit for God and to man's blessing (Matt. 13). The general feeling of Christians who have been in the East Indies is that the new use made of the natives for free labour was part of a providential acting of God's hand, not unlike that of political persecution, in Italy driving bigoted Romanists into Protestant countries. In both cases, those who would not listen by reason of the prejudices at home find themselves outside of the range of the power of these prejudices, and in many cases where, themselves broken, they find loving Christians to sympathise with them and to present the gospel to them. It is this which I think makes the little work among the natives round you have its chief interest: and you and I know that the Cretans being always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies, did not lead Paul to despair but to use means rather to rouse the grace and to repress the flesh in any of them. We do not remember sufficiently the effect upon ourselves of Christian education from infancy. I have oft said this, when I have seen the faults and falls of converted Jews, and converted Roman Catholics. Of course a lie is a lie everywhere. God cannot lie. The Adversary was a liar from the beginning. I cannot say a word for lying. But I conceive that to the Divine mind a lie from a child, from youth brought up to dread and abhor a lie, upon Christian moral grounds, would after its conversion, be quite a different sort of sin from a lie of a converted Jew who had been brought up to believe that father Abraham had taught that "a lie was the statement of an untruth, for private, gain, to a son of Abraham" — (consequently no untruth to a Gentile, one of the Goyim, was a lie); or the Romanist who was taught from childhood that the end sanction the means. Morality is destroyed by such an education.

May the Lord Jesus, who turned round and looked upon Peter, ere he went out and wept bitterly, turn and look upon — just such a look as He looked upon Peter, and give you joy in seeing his soul restored. Poor things are we and hard is it to believe of ourselves that there is no sin named in scripture the seed of which is not in our own flesh and ready to blossom and bud, if we walk in the flesh. You, or I, might go and commit Lot's sin, or David's, or Jonah's, or Peter's, — christians though we be; and we, I, shall do worse unless God keep me and make me crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, right on to the end. The having been kept 35 years in the way is nought unless keeping goes on to the end. More than this, the more kept the worse the fall — if a fall comes. Zeal against sin and tender yearning over the sinner become us; indignation and firm dealing with the sin, but every effort to rescue the fallen one. . . Brethren are making a small collection in London. May the Lord put it into their hearts to give according to their ability — not to me, nor to yourselves for others, but *to the Lord*, so that there may be fruit of the seed sown to His praise. Hoping to write by next post,

I am, most affectionately, G. V. W.

2.

My dear brother in the Lord,

I was speaking, lately, on "Saul (who also is called Paul)" Acts 13: 9. The word Saul, Cruden says, is the same as Sheol "the grave," — one of the things which ever *asking* is never satisfied. I admit that "to ask" is the meaning of the root; but then the participle is passive and not active; and so, if the *eo* active participle may characterize the grave, because it ever is "asking" and never is satisfied, the *au* is passive and can only characterize what is *catechized*. This, if the name be significant, is the meaning of "catechized." I think it admirably fitted to a ruined creature. The Creator's claims exist over, and may be pressed upon, him; but he has no answer to give either as to righteousness, or temperance, or judgment to come: nor, even if catechized by God, as was Job (see the latter chapters) can he give any answer. A creature slipped from its allegiance to its Creator, has no answer to give to Him, or to itself, or to Satan, or the world. The word Paul means "that which is made" created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God prepared before the world was, that we should walk in them, now if "that which is catechized" brings the one catechized into notice, so "that which is made" brings the maker (and not the vessel or person made, so much as the maker) into prominence. Who could take a child of wrath, indwelt by Satan, covered with the spots of the world, and make him fit for God and eternity and heaven? Christ, and Christ alone. Gritty bad clay — fit for nothing in itself; claimed by Satan and driven along the course of this world, Christ the last Adam, life-giving Spirit, could give incorruptible life to such an one as Saul the blasphemer; could set his seal upon the life so given and communicate power to it. He could, having made it to be not of the world as He is not of the world, having washed it from its sins and guilt in His own blood and made kings and priests to God, He could keep the vessel for Himself and use it, as in His own hand, all through its course down here — enabling it to say "to me to live is Christ and to die is gain;" "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be made manifest in us;" "filling up that which remains behind of the sufferings of Christ," etc., etc. And He will not fail to present the vessel so saved and so preserved unto Himself in glory. The power of God in and by Christ was the freight for which the vessel made was prepared. And, in this view of it, how blessed is it to have been a brand plucked from the burning, if now made a light bearer in an evil and wicked world. How blessed to be weak, if it is that His strength may be made perfect in our weakness. The Lord Jesus Christ wants, as He sits in glory waiting till He take the kingdom, occasions in which to display His grace down here, and He finds occasions in all our weakness and by all our difficulties. Oft have I thought that God knew why He placed the Red Sea and the fields of sandy desert beyond it, and looked upon it from earth's creation until Israel's passage out of Egypt, as the occasion prepared before hand for His displays of His own glory in that coming time. Who planted, or who watered, or what man's thoughts were about the sycamore tree, God and Zaccheus' faith found in it the occasion of his seeing Jesus. Poor little man, faith's ladder had been planted and prepared for his heart probably long before he was born 'twas there — but when his heart kindled Jesus-ward, God's sycamore was there ready for him. So, in a different way the Red Sea, no road, no water, no pasturage — fields of sand, an ocean of it: Jordan, Philistines, Hivites, etc.; difficulties, impossibilities, had all been prepared before for God's occasions of showing Israel His love. 'Tis always so. 'Twas so with Abram, with Isaac, with Jacob, with David, and with them all. 'Twas so with Paul and John. And is it not so with us? What we call life here below is a system of difficulties, studiously put together, within and around us, calculated to bring us quickly to our wit's end, if we tried to show our competency, truly, but the rather prepared as the occasion for Christ to show His grace and loving care of, in, and toward us, as we pass along, through them all. He wants the occasion in which to show out that "I am with you;" and "It is I;" and shall we repine or be unwilling to have it so, as that the whole journey down here shall be a history of His triumphant love ever leading us

about, and causing us to be, in all things, more than conquerors through Him that loved us? We are poor things indeed — had nothing of our own, but we are His and He is ours; and the heart that is now set upon us cares for us, and He will lead us on until His own presence shall be our hiding place. The Lord enable us more to lay hold of that handle of every thing which is the Lord's; and not of that which I, or man, or Satan can say, that is mine, not the Lord's. Stones are hot in the sun, but they often keep what is below them cool and moist. Not "our leanness, our leanness" should be our burden, as we pass along here below, but rather "what a Christ is He who has found and picked me up." I set my face to Him-ward and would strengthen my soul in Him. Body, soul, and spirit in me belong to Himself alone, and I would have them wholly His until He comes to take me to Himself. May I not say, and you too, say, "Amen and Amen" for ourselves to this. I do presume to think so and to count upon it before the Lord.

Most affectionately, Yours in Him, G. V. W.

3.

Dear brother in the Lord,

Evil as the days are, and ragged and dirty as the path is through which we are called to pass, — a path where false profession has made sloughs and mires, and wherein the high way is broken down, — yet there is a bright bit at the end upon the earth, even that terminus wherein shall be heard, ere the Spirit leaves the earth, ere the Bride has gone on high, those blessed precious words, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Professors may not know where the Spirit is now; and many may be saying "and where is the church, that assembly which was set up at Pentecost?" But faith can look on high, faith can see