

539 Under New Ownership

In last week's Reflection, "Me, Myself and I", we saw the dangers within a democracy of elevating the People, as well as each Me within the People, to "the top spot", before whom all else must be subservient. If, when or where this foolish elevation is overdone, in practice Almighty God our Creator is dethroned, and the not-so-clever-after-all society slides into the mire. Sadly we can see that contemporary Britain is a clear example of this folly.

God's call to the People, and to each Me within those People, stands in complete contrast. For instance we read how "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God ...", and said to Simon and Andrew, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" (from Mark 1.14-18). Later, the Lord tells us, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (from Luke 9.62).

The message is simple: Almighty God comes First, and is to be honoured as such in the life of every Me who has been redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ" (egs., I Peter 1.18-21 / Revelation 5.9). Our God-given, faithful allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ is no mere "app" downloaded as it were into our lives, to take its place alongside dozens of other apps already in there. Such a "Jesus app" would be given only a few minutes of our time if and when it might suit us – that is hardly what the Lord has in mind when He says those simple words, "Come, follow me"!

Instead we are of course to "abide" in the Lord moment by moment, as Spirit-filled branches of "the true vine" (John 15.1-8). "And now, Israel, (or, for us, "And now, Christ-abiders, ..."), what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10.12-13). Within such God-fearing, Christ-abiding lives, spiritual gifts will be put too good use, and spiritual fruits will become evident (egs., I Corinthians 12.4-11 / Ephesians 4.11-16 / Galatians 5.22-26).

Such Father-wrought, Christ-redeemed, "born-again" lives have become so by the shed blood of Christ and by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit – truly, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2.8-9). So the body, mind and spirit entrusted to each one of us who is "born again" are not our property! – "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (from I Corinthians 6.19-20).

So, displayed above a life of regeneration, new birth, "a new creation" (II Corinthians 5.17), we can imagine a large notice announcing not just "Under New Management", though true, but crucially, "Under New Ownership". Such a regenerate life thus takes its very form, shape and activities from its divine Owner, with its time, gifts, money and energy, as well as its thoughts, words and deeds, all falling steadily into line with His wishes. No wonder then that the Lord God is to be held as the very Reason for, and Focus of, our existence.

We are given many examples, in both Testaments and in times since, of such God-chosen, God-focussed, God-used individuals. In such lives we can assume there was a constant awareness of being always in God's presence, no matter whatever else was going on. For instance, since his extraordinary encounter with Christ outside Damascus that day, Paul's every thought and effort were spent in the ministry which Jesus had given to him, as "a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (from Acts 9.15). The Holy Spirit aptly sums it up later on through Paul's words, "For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain" (Philippians 1.21).

We remember at this time of the Christian year the Lord's ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We can remember too that each one of us, (like Paul, but on a smaller stage in equally needy times), is by God's grace also "a chosen vessel", living God-first lives for God's greater glory.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, [be] honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1.17, KJV).

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