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The Light That Must Not Fail  
by *T. E. Moyer*



Under the Shadow of the Mountain  
by *Robert M. Homiston*



Priorities  
by *Floyd S. Smith*



Power Word: *Koinonia*  
by *Terence Y. Mullins*



What about Communism in Our Churches?  
by *Louis Cassels*

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FEBRUARY 1962

# the Chaplain

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are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.*

## The Light That Must Not Fail

WHEN the writer of the book of Revelation saw a vision of the city of God descending out of heaven, he noted that there were twelve gates or entrances, three on the east, three on the west, three on the north and three on the south. Whatever else this might have meant to the writer, it appears that no matter where a man stands, north or south or east or west, he confronts an open door leading straight into the city of God: "And its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25).

Some routes into the city of God are doubtless better than other routes, but any route that takes us there is a good route. In attempting to maintain a warm and vital devotional life, we will inevitably cultivate many and various methods, and this is good since any method which accomplishes this holy purpose is a good method. Our aim here is not at all to mark out ex-

clusive routes or to designate "right" methods but, rather, to insert a sort of marginal note which may be of help in all our various approaches. And this is merely the assertion that our devotions ought not always to lead us to a peaceable reconciling of tensions; indeed, often they must lead us into a poignant sense of the tensions wrought by two contrasting realities. As an indication of what we mean, we shall consider what we might call a devotional awareness of two tensions: between man's sin and God's forgiveness, and between man's time and God's eternity.

Somewhere near the heart of any man's devotional life is a sense of rapport with God, a confidence of his acceptance of our offering, no matter how imperfect, and a sense of sin forgiven. The immeasurable distances draw near, unspeakable majesty touches our lives and we are given to glimpse, however briefly, the glint of golden wings.

But no matter how exalted, our experience is basically that of every man—at the heart of it is the knowledge that we are sinners whom God loves and has forgiven.

Many a man's devotional life has been shaken and soured by sin—not his own sin, or any particular man's sin, or all men's sins together, but by a wrong outlook upon sin, by a false perspective. We live in a world of sin and of sins, and we chaplains live in a world which sometimes seems filled to overflowing with all those rough and sordid and monotonously repetitious masculine sins which beset our people.

What we need to cultivate is the assurance that no conceivable multiplicity of sins can ever tip the balances of grace to the point where the sins outweigh the power or the eagerness of God to forgive them. No one of us would ever admit, or even allow himself consciously to fear, that there is more sin than there is forgiveness. But often our harried lives, and our crisp and formal and hurried attitudes testify that our devotions need a new perspective. So we go back to that bedrock of every man's personal devotional life: a simple confidence in Christ's power to save.

There, and only there, can we place sin in its true perspective—a thing at once so terrible and so vulnerable that while it could nail Christ to the cross, yet it vanishes beneath his love as darkness is utterly obliterated before the light, without trace or residue.

MANY of us chuckled appreciatively over a cartoon which appeared in a national magazine a couple of years ago: one clergyman said to another, "Yes, but have you ever thought where *we* would be if it weren't for sin?"

Sin is our business; sin is the need to which we were called. Sin crucified Christ, and sin separates man from God. But sin is not some overwhelming flood bearing down upon us, inevitable in its destruction, irremediable, irrevocable. Sin is a sickness for which there is an unailing cure.

Let us, then, never become so discouraged before the blight of sin, or so hypnotized by its machinations, that we lose the joyous confidence that he whom we serve is the Savior.

One of the most remarkable preachers of all Christian history, John Donne, in one of his most extraordinary sermons, weaves an almost magical spell of the consciousness of sin with these words,

... Forgive me, O Lord, O Lord,  
forgive me my sins,  
the sins of my youth, and my  
present sins,  
the sin that my parents cast upon  
me, Original sin,  
and the sins that I cast upon my  
children, in an ill example;  
Actual sins, sins which are man-  
ifest to all the world,  
and sins that I have so labored  
to hide from the world,  
as that now they are hid from



mine own conscience,  
and mine own memory;  
Forgive me my crying sins,  
and my whispering sins,  
sins of uncharitable hate,  
and sins of unchaste love,  
sins against Thee . . .

The boundless confidence in the saving grace of God, where it exists at all, is a unique thing in human society. Within the framework of society, and especially within the structure of military command, there can never be anything approaching an unfailing supply of forgiveness. It is entirely possible that a man may remove himself from all possibility of restoration to the full status of responsible citizenship—but he can never remove himself from the possibility of Christian redemption.

**B**UT a man can never *know* this logically, or psychologically, or historically, or sociologically—or with any other facet of his being. He can know this only when the totality of his being is caught up in glowing devotion to Christ.

One of our most familiar hymns has these words, “. . . and preach Thee, too, as love knows how . . .” *Only* love knows how to preach, and nobody ever knew what love was until Christ loved us and gave himself for us. It is communion with this love which shines in and through our lives with the fadeless light of hope. A man cannot preach, he cannot counsel, he cannot *be* a

clergyman if this light should fail. For this is the light from which all other lights proceed, and if this light should fail we shall be in darkness utter and complete where neither the sun shall shine by day nor the moon by night.

A man can know the love of Christ in its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths, its high mountains and verdant valleys and singing streams, and sense the flame of myrtle along its April hills—he can know this theologically, or intellectually, or poetically—but he can never *know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge* until all his knowing and all his acting and all his feeling and all his life are caught up in love and devotion.

No man can really conceive of the forgiveness of sins, the full and free forgiveness of sin itself. We have difficulty conceiving of the forgiveness of some little slight, some inconsequential spiteful word spoken by a friend. When we try even to conceive of it, we generally make a mess of it, laying down conditions, marking out narrow approaches, saying where it will and will not be efficacious—rendering it unrecognizable.

This faith in God's limitless grace and unfailing forgiveness must shine through our words and our actions throughout our ministry. But this faith cannot be nourished and maintained by any conceivable degree of theological correctness or technical proficiency alone—it can only be derived from an in-

timate life of communion with Him  
"whence the healing stream doth  
flow."

**A**NOTHER double tension which helps maintain our personal devotional warmth is a sense of time and of eternity. On one hand, we cannot permit time to absorb us so thoroughly that the acids of change and decay eat away at our hearts, but, at the same time, we cannot withdraw into some warm and sweet awareness only of the things that are good and true and lovely and of good report. One foot is in heaven, but the other is placed squarely in the middle of life here and now.

This is a double tension of haste and of calm deliberation, of peace of mind often blended with agony of soul. Our devotions must not become somewhat desperate moments of escape, a sort of spiritual tranquilizer which we gulp down now and again when the world becomes too much for us. We do not approach God as disembodied entities detached from the historical process, or even in an attempt to escape from history; we go to him as men among men, as creatures of earth and of time who are not so much trying to escape to him as we are seeking to bring him and his healing grace into the affairs of men.

Of course, we must achieve a sense of the timeless perfection of the Eternal, a confidence in those things which neither change nor decay. Wherever we go, in the

midst of sin and death and pain and grief and the constant agitated busyness of men, we must carry with us a breath of fresh air from off the still, deep waters of God. But time is real, the historical process is not an illusion, and the events of this world are the setting in which God speaks and acts and saves.

Eternity is long, but time is breathtakingly short. Opportunities vanish unfulfilled with the speed of light. Knowledge is not gained, grace is not shared, people are not helped, the Word is not preached—all because the clock ticks, because pages are torn from calendars, because time is so swift, inseparable in beginning and ending, one single flashing moment.

Every tick of the clock is different, unique, never to be repeated or duplicated exactly again, but with every other tick somehow like it in blinding brevity, almost indistinguishable, woven together in perfect similarity like a seamless robe. And all creation, cosmic, lovely and illimitable, has upon it the smell of rot and the stamp of death.

My Father worketh, and I work, said Christ, and we must work, too, for with him we are workers together against death, against time, against lost opportunities, against the sound which in our deafness is so deadly unobtrusive but which roars louder than all the noise of the universe: the simple ticking of the clock.

We commune in our devotions with One who is both in and be-

yond time, One in whose sight a thousand years is but a day, and we need to draw strength and perspective from the timeless reach of His eternity. But our communion with Him is also a trumpet call to duty, a sharp and poignant sense of the fewness of our days and of the magnitude of the task to which we have been called. All of us derive comfort and security and warmth of heart from our devotional experiences, but too few of us—and all of us too seldom—derive the sometimes hidden grace of discipline and commitment.

It is too easy for our devotions to diffuse into some pleasant state or soothing emotion. We tend to desire a generalized sense of spiritual well-being, whereas true Christian devotions often bring us life's sharpest and most particularized commitment to some one task or challenge. Our devotions discipline us for service and, like Isaiah, from the depths of overflowing hearts we say, "Send *me*."

These two flames, then, burn upon the altar of our devotions: a sense of the vast and unspeakable eternity of God, and a sense of the haste, the brevity of life, the fleeting challenges by which doors of service are opened and then are closed forever. If either flame burns low, or goes out, we shall become like Ephraim, "the cake not turned."

But no consideration of our devotional experiences can escape one final, often agonized, cry of questioning: "How? When? Where?"

No perfect answer can be found for these questions, and it is often true that the more loyal we are to our calling, the more agonized will be those cries as we are ever busier about our Father's business. Nevertheless, just as our devotions bring their discipline of commitment to us, so are they predicated upon a disciplining of our time and energy and interest whereby a way is found, a time is set aside and a place is discovered which will be our own personal Eden where God walks with us in the cool of evening. It may be a few moments snatched stubbornly from a hectic day, it may be while walking down a crowded street, it may be some unlikely and unprepossessing place, but it will be transformed into the Garden of God if we are aware of his presence.

Too many of us are believers in what might be called "the environmental theory of devotions." When the time is right, when there is nothing to prevent, when the surroundings are lovely and inspiring—*then* we commune with God. The trouble is, this coincidence of propitious conditions seldom occurs. Looking back, many of the most truly devotional experiences of our lives came in the most unlikely circumstances. Like Paul, we can say, marveling, "When I was weak, then was I strong." For the devotional life we yearn to cultivate is not a thing of times and places hedged about from the world—we aim toward an orientation of life by