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'ARISE, LET US GO HENCE'

(John 14 : 31)

DR. F. W. BOREHAM

'*Arise*', Jesus exclaimed, '*let us go hence*'! Let no man brush it aside as a mere triviality. No triviality ever fell from the lips of the Son of God. He who is tempted to regard these words as incidental or even immaterial, should reflect that they were the *last* five words spoken in the Upper Room—the closing words of that immemorial utterance that began with the promise of the many mansions.

'*Let not your heart be troubled*'!—so He began.

'*Arise, let us go hence*'!—so He closed.

John concludes his Gospel by telling us that '*there were also many other things Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written*'. If, therefore, the exclusions from the inspired record are so mountainous, and the frugality exercised so severe, is it likely that anything that has been admitted can be treated as a triviality, a matter of small importance? To ask such a question is to answer it.

'*Arise, let us go hence*'! It is the *Excelsior* of Jesus. He moves through Time and through Eternity with a forward look in His divine eye. He has always something stupendous ahead of Him. However notable His utterance, He has something still more sublime to say. However amazing His achievement, He has something still more glorious to do. If, on the one hand, it is His divine mission to give to weary feet the boon of rest, yet, on the other, there is an inescapable element of progressive restlessness about Him. Through all the ages to come He will still be moving towards the completion of His celestial and unending programme. 'Excelsior'! 'Excelsior'! '*Arise, let us go hence*'!

'*Arise, let us go hence*'! Five little words! Yet those five words represent five of the most precious factors in this world or in any other.

1. These five words express the *Priceless Boon of the Divine Fellowship*. The experience of the disciples in the Upper Room must have resembled the experience of Peter and James and John

on the Mount of Transfiguration. The three could scarcely credit the evidence of their senses. They seemed to have left the earth millions of miles behind them. Whether they were in the body or out of the body they could not tell. They were seeing things that would have filled the angels with wonder and hearing things that it is not lawful for a man to utter. They were with Elijah, the fiery representative of the Prophets; they were gazing into the face of Moses, the giver of the Law; they were listening to the heavenly converse of these two as they talked with their own glistening and glorified Lord! Their eyes were dazzled by excess of light: their lips were silenced by the splendour that appalled them!

Then, all at once, the vision began to fade. They could not endure the thought that such a moment should prove transitory. 'Lord', they cried, 'it is good for us to be here! Let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elijah!' If only such fleeting ecstasy could crystallize into an abiding rapture! But it could not be! The world, with its aching need, was awaiting their return from the shining heights! 'Arise', Jesus said, '*let us go hence*'! And they made their way down the slope. But they did not descend the mountain as they had ascended it. For all three of them, life had been immeasurably enriched by all that they had seen and heard. In his Epistles, Peter claims special authority on the ground that, in the holy mount, he was an eyewitness of his Lord's majesty, and actually saw Him receive from God the Father honour and glory. James and John felt very similarly. Every common day in the long after-years acquired a new sanction and a new glory from the recollection of those moments on the Mount.

So was it in the Upper Room. It was wonderful beyond words to have participated in the gathering to which the Saviour Himself attached such importance and for which He had made such careful preparation. It was unspeakably wonderful to have participated in that final Passover, that first Communion, that washing of feet, that dismissal of Judas, that warning of Peter, and then to have listened to those deathless cadences that, in the ears of the ages, have sounded like the music of the eternities.

But it came to an end. 'Arise, let us go hence!' And they all went out to persecution, to martyrdom, to death; but they went out braced and strengthened by the banquet of sacred fellowship that they had enjoyed with their Lord in the never-to-be-forgotten room on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

2. These five words express the *Priceless Boon of the Divine Disturbances!* The Upper Room was a pleasant place in which to be; but its tranquillity must be disturbed. 'Arise, let us go hence!' A vital principle lies here—a principle that has never been more picturesquely or more tellingly stated than it was stated by Moses. Amidst the most fearsome and awe-inspiring scenery, the old leader was about to die. And, in dying, he gave the people a philosophy of disturbances. Things cannot go on for ever in the same old way. He looked round upon a wilderness of splintered peaks, jagged summits, scarped crags and beetling cliffs. Everything was wild, weird, precipitous, desolate, and grand. The people were confronted by a hurricane of change. They were passing from one land to another; from one leadership to another; and from a life to which they had grown familiar to a life of a totally different kind.

In view of this whirl of transition, Moses bequeaths to them his 'philosophy of disturbances'! Employing an image suggested by the immense birds soaring in the skies above him—the birds that have their nests amid the solitary fastnesses and gloomy ravines—he assures the people that, with as deep and as mighty a solicitude as the eagle exercises in regard to her eaglets, the Most High will watch over them. But the eagle shows her solicitude for her young, not by defending the nest, but by destroying it! She knows that a nest may become a dangerous place. Hawks, kites and vultures see it from above; rats, weasels and snakes lurk around. If the eaglets are too comfortable in their nest, they will never attempt to fly. So the mother-bird tears out the soft lining of the nest and exposes their tender skin to the hard twigs beneath. Not until the nest is broken up are the young birds safe. The fledglings may resent the process, but it is dictated by the highest wisdom.

We are living in a period to which this imagery particularly

applies. Homes are being depleted. Families are being scattered. It is not a joyous experience. But the companionship of the Upper Room is not intended to be permanent. *'Arise, let us go hence!'* It is for every man, as he leaves any of life's Upper Rooms, to vow that he will carry their fragrant atmosphere with him till his last sun shall set.

3. These five words express the *Priceless Boon of the Divine Guidance*. When the time comes to move, He leads the way! *'Arise, let us go hence!'* If the time has come for striking camp and moving on, He always finds some perfectly simple and perfectly natural means of indicating His will. He may not always give the Sign of the Fleece as He did to Gideon; or the Sign of the Flowers as He did to Aaron when He made the dry rod blossom; or the Sign of the Food as He did to Peter in his approach to the house of Cornelius; but by some sign, suited to the seeker and his special circumstances, God will find a means of directing those who earnestly desire His guidance. Some Pillar of Cloud will precede them in the daytime; some Pillar of Fire will blaze on their horizon in the night. To those who are willing to follow the gleam, there will always come a Kindly Light to lead. *'Let us go hence!'*

'I will guide thee!' He says. Nothing could be more explicit. He even tells us how: *'I will guide thee with mine eye!'* I have seen a noble dog sit at his master's feet, intently gazing into his master's eye for the faintest intimation of his master's will. The words obviously mean that I am to live very near to HIM—in perfect accord with HIM—my eyes riveted upon His. And to those who enter into that rapt and sacred intimacy—such an intimacy as the disciples tasted in the Upper Room—the path that it is their wisdom and their happiness to tread will always be made unmistakably clear. *'Arise, let us go hence!'*

These five words express the *Priceless Boon of the Divine Service*. *'Arise, let us go hence!'* He led His disciples down from the Mount because a miracle needed to be performed. In Raphael's celebrated painting of the Transfiguration, the scene on the summit occupies only a corner picture. In the foreground is the multitude in the valley—the afflicted man, the helpless disciples and the eager, anxious throng. In the same way, He led His

disciples out of the Upper Room because a world needed saving. *The Cross* stood waiting.

There are two principles operating in the individual life—two principles that correspond with the two principles that hold the universe together—the centripetal and the centrifugal. There is the tendency to cleave to the Centre and the tendency to fly to the Circumference. The universe preserves its poise and the earth holds its orbit because the two are so perfectly balanced.

There is the tendency to cleave to the Centre—to build tabernacles on the holy mount; to remain indefinitely in the Upper Room; to sit with Mary at the Master's feet. And there is the tendency to neglect the centre for the Circumference—to turn one's back prematurely upon the glory on the summit; to invent some excuse for leaving the Upper Room; to be busy, like Martha, about a multitude of things.

Have we sufficiently recognized the significance of the fact that, when Jesus ordained His men, and sent them out two by two, He bade them *be shod with sandals*? Now the point is that sandals are easily slipped *off* and easily slipped *on*. A man should be ready, at a moment's notice, to bare his feet. And why? He who has read his Bible knows. Men took the shoes from off their feet when they realized that, God being visibly present, the place on which they stood was holy ground.

Be shod with sandals, said the Master, so that, the moment the Vision comes, you may be ready adoringly to welcome it. Nothing is more important than that a man should keep in touch with his dreams, with his visions, with his revelations. Yes, ready for the revelation and ready, also, for the road! For sandals are easily slipped, *on*. The servant of the Most High must expect the call of the road at any moment. *Be shod with the sandals!* said the Master; so that at a moment's notice you may slip them *off* to welcome the *Vision*, or slip *on* to take to the Road. The crest of the Baptist Missionary Society is a picture of an ox between a plough and an altar, whilst, underneath the symbols, are the words, *Ready for Either!*—ready for service in the field or for sacrifice in the temple!

The Christian stands between the glory and majesty of things

divine on the one hand and all the pathos and the prose of human life on the other. He must be ready at any moment to enter into fellowship with the skies; and he must be ready at any moment to soothe the pillow of a sick child, to comfort a heartbroken woman, or to share the load of a man whose burden is greater than he can bear. Be shod with sandals, so that, whether the revelation or the road shall call, you are ready for either. Be ready when the time comes to sit with the Master in the Upper Room; and be ready, when He bids us arise and go hence, to follow Him in the Paths of service and sacrifice—to Gethsemane and Calvary if need be!

5. These five words express *the Priceless Boon of the Divine Companionship*. Not 'Go hence!' but 'Let Us go hence!'.

He never sends us out of the warmth of the Upper Room into the cold, cold world alone. *Lo, I am with you always!* How Livingstone lived on those words amidst the solitary jungles of Central Africa! How Shackleton relied upon them amidst the snow and ice of Antarctic wastes! How Dr Paton staked everything upon them among the menacing savages of the South seas! And the promise never failed.

Arise, let us go hence! Let us! He and I together! That, I imagine, is what Brother Lawrence meant when he entitled his invaluable little book, *'The Practice of the Presence of God'*. I used to shrink from using the word 'practice'. It seemed to savour of drudgery, as when young people practise music, or practise drawing, or practise shorthand. I preferred to think of the luxury of the Presence, the revelry of the Presence, the ecstasy of the Presence. I was impressed by the unspeakable delight of awaking each morning to the sweetness of His smile, of passing through each common day in a palpitating consciousness of His nearness and of closing my tired eyes every night under the fragrant breath of His benediction.

But I see now that Brother Lawrence's word is the right word. It is good to practise the Presence, to realize it, to test it, to make sure of it, to exult in it.

O Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord,
 Forgive me if I say
 For very love Thy precious Name
 A thousand times a day!

It is good to speak to Him even though I have nothing particular to say: it will intensify my recognition of His immediate immanence: it will unconsciously move me to live my whole life to approval and delight.

Arise, let us go hence! Jesus says, as, step by step, we make our way through this life. And, when the time comes, He will say it on the threshold of the life to come. 'As the gates open', exclaimed Adolph Monod, within sight of the end of his apostolic ministry, 'as the gates open, I shall hear the Master's voice saying, "Arise, let us go hence!" It will not be going out alone, or to be alone yonder, but "*Let us go hence!*" The valley shall be aflame with the light of His presence and the waters of the river shall part at the His touch of His divine feet!'¹

ON HAVING CONVICTIONS

J. B. WATSON

This is a day in which the virtue of open-mindedness is much extolled. To be suspected of being inaccessible to new points of view, or so fixed in opinion as to be above persuasion, is counted an intellectual sin beyond pardon. It is certainly desirable to be ready to look any fresh idea or proposal in the face and give it fair consideration. To fail of this is to fall before the charge of obscurantism. But let us be sure that we understand what we mean by open-mindedness. Far from us be that spurious brand which means leaving the door of the mind open for any thief to enter and remove all our treasures. True openness of mind is to keep an outward facing window from which we may scan the features of any newcomer as he approaches, ready to consider his credentials dispassionately in the light of what we know already to be true.

There are, of course, many subjects on which it is right to suspend judgement. Lord Balfour's phrase, 'I have no settled

¹The above is a chapter from Dr. F. W. Boreham's book, '*Cliffs Of Opal*', by kind permission of the publishers, The Epworth Press, London. The other chapters are also interesting and suggestive in their varied lessons; even for the Bible Student!—Ed.