

# The Living Church.\*

BY THE REV. HUGH A. EVAN HOPKINS, M.A.

IF we are to reach an adequate understanding of the position and condition of the Church of the Living God to-day, we must first look at the contemporary scene in the midst of which she has to carry on her work and witness. Two features of the present environment of the Church seem to be of prime importance. In the first place, we live in an *apocalyptic age*. It is no mere rhetoric, but sober fact, that man has never, since the days of Noah, lived so close to the brink of a volcano as he does to-day. The vaunted wisdom of *homo sapiens* has now placed him within range of a power beside which the discovery of fire dwindles into insignificance. A perpetual cloud of uncertainty masks the summit of the mountain, while millions of men and women, who have no choice but to live their lives on its slopes, are overshadowed by a great danger. Even H. G. Wells, whose mind has been so actively engaged in the past in forecasting the further achievements of scientific man, now admits that it has reached "the end of its tether." It seems possible for some to blind themselves to the significance of atomic discovery by raking desperately in the rubbish of low life. Others are so busy reconstructing their shattered homes and countries that they have not paused to think how, on the human level, only the frailty of sinful man prevents the threatening cloud from breaking upon them, sweeping away all so dearly and carefully restored. It is within such an apocalyptic situation that the Church must function.

If the dark possibility of world-wide military use of nuclear fission provides a sombre background for our picture of the present scene, what are we to say of the *secularity* of the immediate foreground? On our right hand and on our left thousands of men and women are becoming increasingly efficient, much better educated, far more leisured and comfortable, machine-minded, pleasure-ridden and money-mad. "The minds of our people," writes the Bishop of Southwell, "are at present dominated by an all-pervading secularised world-view into which the thought of God scarcely enters, which assumes that physical science and technology are not merely all we know, but all we need to know."<sup>1</sup> Their material needs, for so many of which in the past they have been indebted to the Church, are now provided, after the manner of "Bread and Circuses," by the apparently boundless generosity of the State, while the spiritual need of an eternal Gospel becomes increasingly irrelevant in so pleasant a temporal existence. Unconscious still of the apocalyptic nature of the present hour, men are gradually losing their liberty in the totalitarian interests of a planned society which threatens to make one quarter of the country's population into paid servants of Caesar.

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Within which process, as Frank Bennett so truly points out, the Church is expected to "come forward and sanctify Utopia. We are invited to become a Pied Piper to the nation to lead the nation, not to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, but to fairyland."<sup>2</sup> The demand for a Church, he says, has arisen which will be "cut to the measure of twentieth-century doubt, attuned to the swan-song of a declining civilisation."<sup>3</sup>

We may be confident that a *living* Church would never submit to the Procrustean methods of a planned society, but we cannot be equally sure that the modern State may not try to employ them, nor that the Church is actually alive enough to recognise or resist them. There are signs that the elbow-room in which the Church can employ its agencies is becoming relentlessly less (for instance in the educational field), and the days may not be so far off when a testing time will come, for Caesar will need some ideology to back up his plans for the future, and in the past the Church has often been his best ally. Though there are many Christian people who see in the present situation no cause for apprehension, those of us who are called to any degree of leadership in the Church must take a long look into the future, and see what kind of a world it is into which we are now stepping. We are faced with the vision of contemporary man making his nest so comfortable that he will never want to fly, and at the same time remaining unimpressed by the fact that the shallowness of the roots of the tree in which he rests makes it an exceedingly unreliable perch in the storms of time, and quite unsafe in the crisis of eternity. In these unprecedented circumstances the living Church has to accommodate herself, and against unpredictable forces she must prepare to fight. In what condition does she face this crisis?

Visser 't Hooft, from his intimate knowledge of many branches of the Church on the continent, wrote in 1944 of its being "in a state of great weakness." "We are like governments who thought they possessed an army, but discover on the outbreak of war that it is not a real army at all."<sup>4</sup> Emil Brunner, speaking primarily but not only for the Swiss Church, summarises its condition as one of "reduced intensity." This shows itself, amongst other things, in the difficulty of distinguishing who are "of" and who are not "of" the Church; in a falling-off of regularity of devotional practice and worship; in absence of true Christian fellowship; in ignorance of Christian truth; and in an unreadiness to volunteer and take part in Church activity. As for its appeal to the rising generation, he says, "The Church and the Christian life arouse neither admiration nor annoyance, neither desire nor repugnance, but simply are disregarded."<sup>5</sup> It would be tedious to parallel these remarks from experience in this country, but we all know how much truth there is in this diagnosis of our present state.

Nevertheless, we must remember that our nation, apparently weak and weaponless, rallied and resisted to the utmost after Dunkirk, finally to come through victorious; so both these writers, and many of us with them, see hopeful signs ahead, a fact to which we shall return at the end of this paper. But *we must become aroused*. Complacency is the deadly traitor within our gates. We must face the

questions, Can any but a truly living Church survive the deadening forces of this apocalyptic and materialistic age? And in what sense can our Church be called a *living Church*?

## I.

In trying to answer this we must notice that it is really a misnomer to speak of a living Church. The Scriptural assumption is that the Church of the Living God, of which the Church of England is what P. T. Forsyth would call "an outcrop of the total and continuous Church, one everywhere,"<sup>6</sup> is "The Living Church." It cannot be otherwise for reasons we shall see later. What we have to examine now is whether its branches, and more particularly the one to which we are privileged to belong, show signs of the life which pulsates throughout the whole Body of Christ wherever the conditions for life exist. What are these signs?

The most obvious symptom of the existence of life is *Growth*. To quote Swete's translation and interpretation of Ephesians iv. 16, "There is vitality and there is growth in every part which is in real union with the Lord, and in the body as a whole: 'from whom all the body, constructed and drawn together by every ligament of the supply according to the working in the measure of each single part, causes the growth of the body.'"<sup>7</sup> We can think of this divine growth in the phenomenal development of the primitive Church. By a process of maturation, living cells conveying fresh life to other parts, the small nervous band of fear-ridden but prayerful disciples in the upper room extended their influence until the Church of Christ began to appear not only in Jerusalem, but in all Judaea, and in Galilee, in Samaria, in Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, Italy, and even far away Ethiopia. "Never," writes Professor Latourette, "in the history of the human race has the record ever been quite equalled. Never in so short a time has any other religious faith . . . achieved so commanding a position in such an important culture."<sup>8</sup> Is anything akin to this happening to-day? If so, where? And what are we to say about the less easily measured growth of the Church in "grace and in the knowledge of God?" As in human life character develops more slowly than the physical body, so it is in the life of the Body of Christ. But let us not be mistaken over the relative importance of character to size. Is growth in grace a feature demonstrating the vitality of our Church?

A second sign of life is *Increase of Harmony*. As a child grows so its power to control its faculties and co-ordinate the actions of its limbs increases. The *Koinonia* of the early Church included, be it remembered, such diverse temperaments and traditions as those of Peter and John, of Matthew the paid servant of the Roman overlord, and Simon the zealous nationalist. P. T. Forsyth has written that "life is the power to hold variety together, rather than produce it."<sup>9</sup> He was thinking of the strange fact that revival, as is happening in some places even to-day, threatens to bring division. It would seem that one of the signs that revival is a genuine work of God is the degree of true fellowship it produces, for we all know how division in our home Churches is almost always the result of absence of life.

Whether within a cell or group for what Luther would call *mutua conversatio et consolatio fratrum*,<sup>10</sup> or on a larger scale between different branches of the Church of Christ, let us examine ourselves and see whether the life within our Church is bringing about such co-operation and co-ordination. Harmony both within and between Churches was not, and never is, easily attained, but it is a feature of New Testament Christianity which shames the insularity of sub-Christian sectarianism. The invisible and hidden unity of all true Christians in the one living Church, which the Reformers taught, was never intended to exclude visible harmony between Christians of varying outlook. The real unity we have in Christ, not the superficial, unreal uniformity which so often masquerades in its place, needs demonstrating before a divided world. The 'great new fact of our time,' the world-wide Church, is the one unifying hope of the nations. And what is true on the grand scale is true also parochially. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples."

We turn now to a third symptom of the existence of life, *Increase in Intelligence*. A proper development of the mind is essential before a child can act or speak correctly. How does the Evangelical Church stand in this respect? Is Forsyth's judgment of 1917 still true in 1946: "The total lack of an evangelical theology is for a Church at least a defect not simply theological but moral. . . It takes the power out of our optimism, and reduces the fabric of the Church to religious booths covered by gentle fern."<sup>11</sup> A strange place to find a Church militant! The early Church, taught by God's Spirit, produced its thinkers. Have Paul and Augustine got their modern counterparts? If they have, are we studying them?

If the Church of our day is to make an intelligent impact on the life of the world, it is time every member of it, and not the theologians only, put his mind to rethinking his ideas in terms consonant with the experience of to-day. Christianity is largely looked upon now as a vague sentiment, a religious ethic, somewhat closely linked with, and soon to be as obsolete as, the old school tie. The element of the supernatural, the idea of revelation, the great dogmas of original sin and judgment, of grace and redemption, have to be interpreted anew to a sceptical but disillusioned generation who may soon be in desperate need of what they have ignored so long. There was a time when theology, of the Wellhausian order, was regarded by many, perhaps rightly, as the Church's greatest evil, especially when it crept within her own gates. More weakening, though less radical, has been the almost undisputed sway of modern liberalism, with what Dr. Hromadka calls "its arrogant and yet breath-taking expeditions into the realm of the holy in order to bring God down to the earth, to domesticate Christ and His majestic truth, and to subordinate him to our 'religious experiences'."<sup>12</sup> But the day of such theology has passed. We may now regard Biblical Theology as one of our greatest allies, and a return to dogma as an essential step in evangelism.

We turn next to the fourth feature of a living Church, *the power to speak*. In the primitive Church this showed itself from the earliest days. Men who had hardly given thought to abstract theological concepts at all, whose language was no doubt freely interlarded with

colloquialisms, found themselves empowered, indeed driven, to give outspoken witness and prophetic voice to what they had experienced as members of the living Church. They picked up the prophet's mantle and faced hostility and misunderstanding in a spirit strangely absent in our present apologetic days, when it is still considered presumptuous to be dogmatic, and not quite nice to talk about God in the street.

If the life of God were truly flowing through the Church to-day, she would recapture her prophetic calling. Where is the Daniel to be found who can read the writing on the modern palace wall, and interpret to a dissolute generation the trend of divine judgment? Where are the men who can combine, in the spirit of the Biblical apocalyptists (as Professor Rowley has shown<sup>13</sup>), that pessimism and optimism which is actually clear-sighted realism? In a day when men do not want to face unpleasant facts, the true preacher will have to run the risk of being called a Jeremiah. But within the Church itself we can remember the words of Berdaev: "The prophets of Christianity are not optimistic, they give no support to the theory of progress, they condemn with severity the evil from which there is no escape in this world. But neither are they pessimistic, for the fact is they are far beyond human optimism or pessimism."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the first word the Church has got to learn to say is "No." I refer not to what a widely read Church paper calls, in striking headlines, "Protestant Rowdiness," but to *positive refusal*. Nehemiah in the plain of Ono, Daniel and his companions in Babylon, Peter and John before the Council at Jerusalem, Niemöller in his pulpit at Dahlem, Bergravv in Norway, were men who had learned when to say "No." Frank Bennett, referring to similar totalitarian claims of Caesar upon the allegiance of men who belong to God, writes: "The world that is coming looks like being a world in which only a strong and living faith will maintain a No. Our No may well become the only No that is heard."<sup>15</sup> Lord Lindsay maintains that without prophets "we cannot keep Caesar in his place."<sup>16</sup> Berdaev, recognising what has happened in Russia, believes that "the whole future of Christianity and the possibility of its renaissance depends on whether prophetism will or will not be recognised and revealed within it."<sup>17</sup> These are weighty words from men of vision. We will do well to remember that if the National Church is to succeed in guiding the nation through paths increasingly overgrown by State encroachment, its ministers must be transformed from a body of mealy-mouthed "Yes-men" into prophets of fire.

A fifth feature of life is *activity*. An entirely inactive person is either diseased, dying or dead. So with the Church. What was the chief activity of the early Church? It was evangelism. Preaching the Gospel was a special calling for some, but witnessing for Christ was incumbent on all. Evangelism covers both and more. It has been described as "not a special branch of Christ's work, but a purposeful activity affecting every department of Church life, and influencing every aspect of national life." It is helpful to recall that the word *Ecclesia* originally meant an assembly of citizens summoned together for the transaction of public affairs. Activity and business are the

true *raison d'être* of the Church's existence ; but by this we do not mean an endless round of Committee meetings and organisations. We mean the penetrating of every department of life by the Christian message. It involves bringing to an end what Visser 't Hooft calls "the schizophrenia of obeying the Gospel in personal relationships, and obeying the laws of the world in professional decisions."<sup>18</sup> It means demonstrating that the secret of all reconstruction is the re-creation of men. It means preparing the Christian to live his life in community. It means disclosing the principles of noble social life, boldly condemning and fighting evil wherever it shows itself and influencing public opinion on matters which involve moral issues. In fact, as Bishop Barry has said, "In the coming time more than ever the Church must be outward moving into the market-place if it is to exhibit the secular relevance of a supernatural Christianity."<sup>19</sup> A living Church will show its life in all these and many other ways. Does ours ?

## II.

As we have been looking, very cursorily, at certain features of Church life which one may expect to demonstrate vitality, the thought may have arisen, "Yes, all this is true, but we fall far short of the ideal. Is there any way whereby the Church as she is today may become the Church as she ought to be ?" There are those who believe that the answer to this query is to be found in a process of widespread advertising, brighter posters, severer emasculation of the Offices, and the bolder use of films and modern technique. While undoubtedly the Christian should not be trailing behind the man of the world in matters of this sort, yet at all costs we must maintain that they are secondary, very secondary, matters. D. R. Davies has reminded us that "the thick hide of contemporary secularised man is not going to be penetrated by mere religious application of technology which is his proudest creation. Mechanised masses are not going to be stirred into repentance by machinery functioning religiously."<sup>20</sup> We would do well to remember that Carlyle, in a far less mechanical age than ours, wrote about the first century Church : "How did Christianity rise and spread abroad among men ? Was it by institutions and establishments, and well arranged systems of mechanism ? Not so. . . It arose in the mystic deeps of man's soul . . . and flew like hallowed fire from heart to heart, till all were purified and illuminated by it. . . Here was no mechanism ; man's highest attainment was accomplished Dynamically, not Mechanically."<sup>21</sup> We have not gone nearly deep enough in our analysis of the present predicament of the Church if we have not recognised its prime need as a fresh outpouring of the *Dunamis* of God the Holy Spirit.

To hear some Chapter Meetings discuss the Report on Evangelism one would think that, like certain disciples at Ephesus, they "have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Certainly far too many of those who have become freshly conscious of the need for the conversion of England through the Church have forgotten that, in the Creed they profess to believe, the Holy Ghost and the Holy Catholic Church are rightly in close conjunction. Have they forgotten,

too, the Nicene declaration that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord, and Giver of Life?" These two truths are inseparable. The Church is the Community of the Holy Spirit. Abraham Kuyper has pointed out that "not the individual believer, but the whole Church as a body possesses the full anointing of the Holy One. . . . And this applies not to the Church of one period, but of all ages. The Church of today is the same as in the day of the Apostles. The life lived then is the life that animates it now."<sup>23</sup> While it is undoubtedly true that the influence of the Holy Spirit is not rigidly confined within the bounds of the Church, and also that He indwells each member of the Body of Christ, this individualistic aspect of His work has been inclined in the past to obscure the corporate nature of His activity. At Pentecost the Spirit came upon "each of them," but simultaneously and collectively. It may well be that we also have to learn afresh that the whole local ecclesia is the *naos* in which God dwells by His Spirit; and it is by the renewing of the Holy Ghost that the whole Church is re-created in successive generations. William Temple is quoted in the conclusion of the Report on Evangelism as saying, "Remember, the supreme wonder of the history of the Christian Church is that always in moments when it has seemed most dead, out of its own body there has sprung up new life; so that in age after age it has renewed itself, and age after age by its renewal has carried the world forward into new stages of progress, as it will do for us in our day, if only we give ourselves in devotion to its Lord and take our place in its service." The life-secret of the living Church is God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit.

It will readily be seen how in each of the five aspects we have been considering, the Holy Spirit is revealed as the one power whereby such vitality can be brought about. In the first place, the primary purpose of the Spirit coming upon the Church was to provide the life-force whereby the world could be evangelised, and the Christian enabled to commend the Gospel by growth in grace and in the knowledge of God. Again, whether it was a case of disparity of gift as in Corinth, or the age-long rift between Jew and Gentile as at Ephesus, Paul reminds his readers that there is only "one body and one Spirit", and urges them to maintain "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. iv. 3, 4). Even though, as in the cells which go to make up the human body, there is infinite variety of function, so in the Church there are differences of talent, vocation, ministration and responsibility—yet "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 11).

The Spirit of God is not only the secret of the growth in extent and character and harmony of the Church, but also the dynamic whereby its thought-life can be inspired, its witness borne and its activity directed. Do we seek the illumination of the One whom Christ sent to guide us into all truth, in our theological reading? Or are we satisfied with "dry-as-dust" academic orthodoxy instead of living truth? Is our speaking for God carried out "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," as was the case with the handful of uncultured fisherfolk from Galilee who in their halting dialect brought men to their knees in repentance every time they spoke? And what of Church activity? We live in an age of organisation; things have

reached such a pitch, even within diocesan and parochial machinery, that Frank Bennett cries out in justifiable revolt, "No breath of genuine life moves in it. Yet more and more of our straitened resources are devoted to it, more of our limited man-power, more of our time and energy. The student is taken from his books, the priest from his prayers, the pastor from his flock. Had one of the present day successors of the apostles been writing to Timothy he would probably have said, 'Do the work of an organiser'." At all costs let us firmly and clearly draw the line, if we can, and pray for the fresh breath of the Spirit to blow through the collect-ridden round of parochial routine.

But it is not only in the case of organisations that we desperately need the Holy Spirit's ministrations. We have got to-day altogether new problems to face, new responsibilities to shoulder, a new kind of age in which to live. The Church will not be able to apply its force to any situation unless guided thereto by the same Spirit that bade Peter go and baptise the first Gentile, that separated and sent forth Barnabas and Saul from Antioch, that guided the Church Council at Jerusalem over the vexed question of the spread of Christianity beyond Jewry, that forbade Paul and Silas to enter Asia Minor in order that they might be free to answer the call from Macedonia (Acts xi. 12; xiii. 2, 4; xv. 28; xvi. 6, 7). The first century Church had no monopoly of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Surely we are not so well organised that in the twentieth century the third person of the Trinity has become redundant?

### III.

Granted then that the greatest need of the Church to-day is not new organisation but new life, and that that life is made real by the Spirit of life, how may we expect Him to work? Undoubtedly the Scripture teaches that the Spirit blows where and how He will, and influences men's hearts and lives in most unexpected ways; yet normally He uses those hall-marks of a true Church, the Word and the Sacraments. This thesis would take a whole paper to develop fully, but we must shortly remind ourselves of the close connection between them.

We shall not delay to discuss the manner of the original inspiration by the Holy Ghost of the "Word of life." The important fact is that the Word of God is a constant means of feeding the life of the Church, as it is of the individual. The interpretation and application of the inspired writings is one of the present works of God's Spirit. It is as we listen to Him ("He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches") that light is thrown on the pages of Scripture, that repentance springs up in convicted hearts, that the words of the ancient Canon become God's contemporary word to our generation. Now what place has the Word in our Church life? Is Brunner's diagnosis of "our present plight" correct? "The congregation suffers increasingly from spiritual undernourishment, and from substitutionary nourishment. What has often been offered has not been that which builds, sustains and increases the Church—the Word of life. The Gospel was either presented in a lifeless manner that bore no witness, in a manner that was not begotten of a living



faith, and could not beget a faith, or handed forth as the wisdom of men, idealism, moralism, instead of the Word of God, stones instead of bread."<sup>24</sup> We need to get back to the Bible as the means whereby the Spirit can speak to ourselves, and through us to our people and the world around. The "Churches under the Cross," as our persecuted continental brethren were called, have discovered this secret. Dr. 't Hooft tells how "the Word is at work . . ." amongst them. May it be so with us also!

But rightly as we follow the Reformers in putting the Word of God emphatically first, we must also remember that the ministry of the Spirit is also carried on through the Sacraments. This, again, is a vast subject in itself. It will be enough if we recall the close link between the work of the Spirit in bringing about conviction, repentance and regeneration—and baptism. We are utterly dependent on His working to make effective, and to bring to full fruition in the life of the members of Christ, the faith in which they are brought to baptism. That experience of which baptism is so beautiful a symbol and pledge, death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit.

The link between the Holy Spirit and the Sacrament of Holy Communion is not quite so prominent, though it is brought to our attention by the opening Collect for purity. Moreover, Dr. Warren has reminded us<sup>26</sup> of Cranmer's description of the faith in which the individual should approach Communion: "This faith God works inwardly in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, and confirms the same outwardly to our ears by the hearing of His Word, and to our other senses by the eating and the drinking of the sacramental bread and wine in the Holy Supper." Cranmer goes on to point out how it is through the Spirit that Christ is made known to us in a real Presence of which we, by faith, are made spiritually conscious.<sup>27</sup>

And so we conclude that if the Word is to come alive to and through the Church, and if the Sacraments are to be lifted from the plane of religious routine to that of means of grace whereby divine life is freshly infused into His Church, the Spirit must be free to operate, thereby putting new meaning into familiar words, awakening spiritual desire in dormant hearts, and breaking out in power upon a godless world through his self-chosen medium of an imperfect Church. It is for you and me to see that nothing hinders this divine liberty of working, that as far as we are concerned He may have His own way with us.

#### IV.

In closing, our thoughts must turn to the living Christ Who is "the head over all things to the Church which is His body," (Eph. i. 22), He who, having "the seven Spirits of God," gave His verdict on the Church in Sardis (Rev. iii. 1). It is Him with whom we have to do. It is within the House of God that judgment begins. The temple courts must be cleansed before the public can be blamed for neglecting them. How easy it is for us Christians to sit in judgment on a reprobate world! It is not so easy to fling ourselves and our Church open before the gaze of the One whose eyes are "like a flame of fire."

But if ever the Church to which we belong, our Sardis, is to become again the Church it should be, a living part of the ever-living Church Universal, our humiliation must become profounder than it has yet been.

In a passage which Hengstenberg says "is admirably fitted to awaken in us a sacred shudder at what is merely nominal"<sup>28</sup>, the voice which is "as the sound of many waters" declares: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead." The flow of God's life-giving Spirit to the parts of His Body had been so hindered that death and corruption had set in even to that which was part of a live organism. History repeats itself in many a modern instance. The popular verdict of a successful Church may not agree with God's knowledge of its true state. Apparent life and feverish activity may often be a superficial disguise to a decaying Church. A reputation for success may mean little in the light of an eternity where life is measured by no numerical category.

We are convinced, as we look out into the immediate future, that the real hope of the Church lies not in popularising it to the taste of *hoi polloi*, but in concentrated attention upon "the few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." Not only is it historically possible to trace God's method of progressive revelation through the faithful remnant of Israel, but it appears to be His method still. The Report on Evangelism lays stress on this point, and so do many modern writers. Emil Brunner, for instance, while so rightly catechising the superficial Christianity of many Church circles, maintains that the minority character of a Church can be a sign of its spiritual power rather than of its spiritual weakness.<sup>29</sup> "What are our assets?" asks Frank Bennett, in summing up the situation today. "Under God, by far the greatest asset is a body of immensely faithful people of all sorts scattered up and down the country in the parishes. Their faith, Peter's faith, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, is the rock on which the Church is built. . . It is indeed a living foundation."<sup>30</sup>

The strategy and hope of the future, God seems to be showing us, is to be that of the persecuted, witnessing Church of the Catacombs rather than of the popular Constantinian order. We read of what has been happening on the continent, and may well hope to see it happen here: "The leaders of the peoples are quite startled to find that the old people of God, which they thought was in the process of dying, is showing an unexpected vitality," writes Visser 't Hooft<sup>31</sup>. Whether we think of the great influence of a wholly committed minority movement upon the internal or external policy of a nation; or whether we think of a small cell in a parish making its quiet impact upon the life of nominal Christians around, the principle is the same: concentration upon the few, faithful, reborn living believers in whom the Spirit is active, and upon whom the divine commendation falls, in order to reach the many amongst whom the Spirit is working, but upon whom divine judgment at present rests.

We have seen, then, that the living Church is animated by the Spirit of life, under the control of the living Christ as Head of the Body, proclaiming the Word of the living God through the medium of

imperfect but faithful Christians, to a generation upon whom death is laying its paralysing hand. How we should thrill at the privilege and responsibility of such a ministry! But instead of thrill we find so often, perhaps even here in our midst, despondency, and sometimes despair. Thinking of our local congregation, the cry comes uninvited to our lips, "Can *these* bones live?" Let us remember that though, as in the famous vision, they were "very many and very dry," still there is hope, even confidence. First came the prophetic challenge (the Addresses at Conference and Council), "O ye dry bones . . . ye shall live." Then the noise and the shaking (the organisation and the planning)—"but there was no breath in them." Finally came the cry to heaven, the prayer of desperation, "Come from the four winds, O Spirit, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And they did live, and "stood upon their feet an exceeding great army."

By the same power, and in answer to the same kind of prayer, may we confidently expect to see the Church militant arise and live, even in this valley of dry bones, even in our Sardis.

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us ;  
Revive thy Church with life and power,  
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,  
And fit thy Church to meet this hour.

- 1 Church and Leadership, p. 86.
- 2 Laodicea in the Twentieth Century, p. 19.
- 3 Op. cit., p. 18.
- 4 The Wretchedness and Greatness of the Church, p. 6.
- 5 The Predicament of the Church, pp. 84, 86.
- 6 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 60.
- 7 The Holy Spirit in the New Testament, p. 311.
- 8 A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 1, p. 112.
- 9 Op. cit. p. 36.
- 10 Brunner, Op. cit. p. 95.
- 11 Op. cit. p. 33.
- 12 Doom and Resurrection, p. 47.
- 13 The Relevance of Apocalyptic, p. 153.
- 14 Freedom and the Spirit, p. 361.
- 15 Op. cit. p. 16.
- 16 The Predicament of the Church, p. 21.
- 17 Op. cit. p. 360.
- 18 Op. cit. p. 44.
- 19 Op. cit. p. 55.
- 20 "The Record," 18. 4. 46.
- 21 Miscellanies, II, 328.
- 22 The Work of the Holy Spirit, p. 185.
- 23 Op. cit. p. 50.
- 24 Op. cit. p. 87.
- 25 Op. cit. p. 37.
- 26 Strange Victory, p. 54.
- 27 The True and Catholic Doctrine and Use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I. xvi.
- 28 The Revelation of St. John, Vol. I, p. 168.
- 29 Op. cit. p. 84.
- 30 Op. cit. p. 39.
- 31 Op. cit. p. 26.