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Position and Power

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Undoubtedly the word which occurs most often in religious - and especially evangelical - circles today is the word "power." In addresses and prayers it is the keynote from which and to which there is a constant movement. All the world over it is the same. Listening to speakers and praying in languages in which one is not conversant, a certain word occurs with almost monotonous reiteration, and on enquiry one is not surprised to learn that it is this word. The absence of power and the necessity for it is betrayed or confessed in many ways; not only directly and humbly by the more spiritually minded among God's people, but by the loud display of ingenious resourcefulness in advertisement, "stunts," organisation, drives, etc., which are a more sad giving-away of the case than what is meant to be implied by them, viz.: - that there is life.

We do not intend to embark upon a consideration of this subject in general from all of its angles, but to deal with one basic thing, more basic even than the reception of the Holy Spirit. The matter is very rarely dealt with in relation to the Holy Spirit, and certainly no treatise can be anything like complete otherwise. The scriptures give good warrant for this, and yet there is a sense in which this matter does not begin there. The Master made it very clear that before there could be a Pentecost there were certain very deep and vital things to transpire. Pentecost was to be very truly an effect, and not only a cause; the end of much as well as a beginning; a seal and not only a pledge. Before there could be the counterpart of Christ's Jordan anointing upon the members of His Body the Church, there must of necessity have been a Baptism into His death, a union with Him in the entombment of the "body of sin." His death had meant the closing of the door upon the old creation; the first Adam had been dealt with and effectually relegated to the place where he would no longer have any

consideration or acceptance from God, and being reckoned as dead, only the inclusive "Last Adam" would receive the fulness of God. In the day of the anointing of the servants of God of old, very definite and explicit instructions were given in relation to the anointing oil. This holy oil was in no wise to come upon man's flesh and there was to be no attempt to make anything like it.

The oil is always a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the "flesh" a type of the old fallen nature or "Adam." God strictly refuses to allow the Holy Spirit to come upon uncrucified men and women. "Being made conformable to His death," is the only path to Pentecost. All our motives in seeking power will be tested by fire. Are we seeking personal influence, popularity, demonstrations, reputation, prestige, acceptableness, success, something of a kingdom of this world? We may think our motive to be perfectly pure; but not until we pass into death, death to any or all of the above, and find ourselves "despised and rejected of men," our names cast out as evil, and a real falling to pieces (seemingly) of our work, do we really come to face the real purpose and motive of our having any place in the work of God. The death of everything, or the eclipse of everything within and without is a good test, and all the men of God who have been *truly* used by Him have gone this way. Not upon our flesh - whether it be the gross flesh or the refined, soulish, educated flesh - will God allow His Spirit to come.

Before there can be a Pentecost there must have been a Calvary. Before there can be the fire of God there must be an altar and a sacrifice; and it must be the *burnt* offering in which everything is consumed. Undoubtedly the disciples of our Lord went through the death of everything of ambition, expectation, vision, self-confidence, etc., when their Master was crucified, and then they tasted deeply of that death which was to be wrought out progressively during all the days which were to be. Their views, ideas, "convictions," methods, scales of values, standards of judgment, dispositions, temperaments, personal influence, and every part of their life later went through this process of judgment, disintegration and death, and in every deeper baptism into death they were raised more fully into His life - not their own. Each experience was more critical and crucial and devastating than the last, and doubtless they sometimes wondered if there would be anything at all left; but so the life was becoming more abundant.

This was and is the initial position which alone means power, and any seeming power which is not resultant from the deep death of the natural life of the individual or community is a making of oil like unto the true but not the true; and therefore in the deepest sense not the anointing of God, but a subtle deception. But there is a further element in this matter of position. In the world and the flesh Satan had judicial rights. The nature of these and how he came by them cannot be discussed in this brief article (this may be dealt with in future issues of this paper); the fact is patent and is clearly recognised in the scriptures, and particularly by Christ Himself. The title "The Prince of this world," is itself indicative. These judicial rights and the ground of Satan's claims Christ came to deal with; to destroy the ground and to possess Himself of the rights.

In the light and the power of His cross, which He had accepted at His baptism, and on the ground of His predestined position as the GOD chosen "Prince of this World," Christ possessed a mystic authority which was recognised in every sphere and always set over against another authority. The Greek word *exousia*, translated in the A.V. "Power" and in the R.V. "Authority" would be more accurately translated "Jurisdiction." See the recognition of this superior jurisdiction for instance in Matthew 7:29, where it is set over against that of the Scribes; in Matthew 8:9 where it is above that of the Roman Empire behind the centurion; in Matthew 21:23 where the Pharisees betray their recognition of this mystic thing. The ninety-four occurrences of this word in the New Testament are

very illuminating. Satan claimed the jurisdiction of the world, Luke 4:6. Christ did not deny his claim then, but went to the cross crying, "Now is the Prince of this world cast out," and having dealt with him and all the ground of his claim, rose triumphant saying "All jurisdiction has just been given to Me in the heavens and on earth, for this reason go ye into the whole world and proclaim the good news."

In the light of this triumph and because He held this position in Himself He had said to His disciples, "Behold I give unto you jurisdiction over all the power (*dunamis*=driving-force) of the enemy," Luke 10:19. After His having possessed Himself of this jurisdiction on behalf of the race - as He had possessed it in Himself as the Son of God - He promises them that they shall receive Power (*dunamis*=driving-force) when the Holy Spirit is come upon them, Acts 1:8. There can never be "Dunamis" until there is "Exousia," that is, there can never be *driving force* until there is *position*.

God will only put His Power behind those who are in the authoritative position, and none are there who have not been incorporated into Christ in death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and reign, and this as a present spiritual experience. The jurisdiction of Christ through His Cross has to function through the members of His Body.

One was struck with an illustration of this in New York. On one of the great thoroughfares there moved at a considerable pace an almost unbroken stream of traffic representing driving force to the extent of hundreds of thousands of horse-power. Suddenly it all stopped dead. Looking for an explanation one found it in the uplifted hand of one man. It was not the counter-force of his arm, but the jurisdiction in which he stood. Above him was a control-tower, and as he had received the indication from above, so he stepped out and raised his hand. Had his jurisdiction been flouted, the superior driving force of the State would have stepped in and put that rebellious element permanently out of action. This is a parable. Christ has the jurisdiction, we are incorporated into Him if we have on all points accepted and claimed our identification with Him, thus we have become the instruments of that authority over the driving-power of the enemy in every sphere where his victory is not recognised.

By a life in the Spirit we are able to receive by discernment those indications from above - the "Head," and then command the situation and put the enemy's work out of action. The word "destroy" in the New Testament, means "put out of action," and this is related to "the works of the devil," and progressively wrought out on the ground of Calvary by "The Church which is His Body." This is not vulgar exorcism, for it can only be effectual as the Holy Spirit takes the initiative in us and through us, and we must know His "energising." Undoubtedly it was because of their absolute union with their victorious Lord, and the recognition of their judicial authority - not over men - but over Satan and His Kingdom which was the ground of the Holy Spirit's seal and anointing of the apostles and first believers. Galatians 2:20, is for ever the key to the situation.

One could write volumes upon how one has seen this wrought out in their own life and ministry, and from time to time glimpses will be given in this periodical. Here, however, we state the fact, and reaffirm that the measure of OUR death, is the measure of His power and life; and only as we, dying daily to the old creation, the natural life - having initially accepted the utterness of its condemnation at the Cross - and living daily in the Spirit, occupy the position of "Reigning in life by the One Man Jesus Christ," can the jurisdiction and power of the Sovereign Head be shared and mediated by and through us. Thus in this two-fold sense:- POWER IS POSITION!