

At the crossroads

by T. Austin-Sparks

"Thus says the LORD, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

At some point — not quite easy to fix — a false current had entered the stream of the life of God's people. Small at first, it had gathered momentum, until it had taken control and was carrying everything before it.

The effect was the almost total loss of a central and controlling, integrating authority; a loss of one uniting union and objective. Out of this there arose confusion; no one knowing what was right or wrong. This confusion and uncertainty became wearing and wearisome, and futility took the heart out of them. The inevitable result of all this was division.

Some wearily accepted the situation and sought to neutralize it by compromise, Some, numbed and bewildered, stood with hand on hips (metaphorically) hoping that something would come round the corner and things would improve. Others were fearful and anxious as to where it would all lead to.

To this situation God spoke in the words quoted above. It was a pointer as to the way, and a challenge to courage, faithfulness, and humility.

"Stand you in the ways, and see", said the Lord.

The ways were the crossroads, the place of alternatives. Go back to where you made the wrong choice, took the wrong turning, and got off the way of blessing. In the light of the unhappy present, reconsider your decisions. Let us ask of ourselves whether "the old paths" with all their difficulties and conflicts were not better than this present time.

"Stand". Pause, reflect. Consider, relax, break the spell. The cure with Israel seems definitely to come down on the side of: "the old paths". There was then an authoritative voice, a throne overhead, a vision and purpose uniting, coordinating; a distinctive objective, and an impact upon peoples near and far. Those days of David and Solomon were such "old paths". They were days when Heaven was in evidence.

Then came that false current in the nature of turning off the Heavenly. They stooped to the earthly, the tangible, the present, the popular and less ostracized.

So the realm and the level began to change, until the situation in Jeremiah's time was the general. But people were weary of soul.

If it is thought that the diagnosis which we have given is strained or a mistake, look at the inclusive answer in Jer. 17:12:

"A glorious throne set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."

The rule of the heavenly is the sanctuary; the refuge and the rest. It was the way of the opened Heaven, which is the way of God's satisfaction.

The Lord says, *"and you shall find rest for your souls"*. We seem to have heard words like those before.

The reconsideration of the crossroads must lead to action.

Having stood, asked and seen — "walk therein".

Repent, return, decide, do! — "walk therein".

The open mind and heart. The submissive and humble will. The honest and courageous resolve and committal.

"Stand". "Ask". "Walk". "Find rest".