

"TO HIM THAT WAITS"

To him that waits, all things reveal themselves, provided that he has the courage not to deny in the darkness what he has seen in the light.

Waiting is a window opening on many landscapes. For some, waiting means the cessation of all activity when energy is gone and exhaustion is all that the heart can manage. It is the long slow panting of the spirit. There is no will to will—"spent" is the word. There is no hope, not hopelessness—there is no sense of anticipation or even awareness of a loss of hope. Perhaps even the memory of function itself has faded. There is now and before—there is no after.

For some, waiting is a time of intense preparation for the next leg of the journey. Here at last comes a moment when forces can be realigned and a new attack upon an old problem can be set in order. Or it may be a time of reassessment of all plans and of checking past failures against present insight. It may be the moment of the long look ahead when the landscape stretches far in many directions and the chance to select one's way among many choices cannot be denied.

For some, waiting is a sense of disaster of the soul. It is what Francis Thompson suggests in the line: "Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!" The last hiding place has been abandoned because even the idea of escape is without meaning. Here is no fear, no panic, only the sheer excruciation of utter disaster. It is a kind of emotional blackout in the final moment before the crash—it is the passage through the Zone of Treacherous Quiet.

For many, waiting is something more than all of this. It is the experience of recovering balance when catapulted from one's place. It is the quiet forming of a pattern of recollection in which there is called into focus the fragmentary values from myriad encounters

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of many kinds in a lifetime of living. It is to watch a gathering darkness until all light is swallowed up completely without the power to interfere or bring a halt. Then to continue one's journey in the darkness with one's footsteps guided by the illumination of remembered radiance is to know courage of a peculiar kind—the courage to demand that light continue to be light even in the surrounding darkness. To walk in the light while darkness invades, envelops, and surrounds is to wait on the Lord. This is to know the renewal of strength. This is to walk and faint not.