

DR. ERNEST F. CROCKER

the MAN
in White

Extraordinary Accounts
of the Intervening Power
of the Living God

'Let Jesus speak to your heart about how much he loves you.'

HEIDI BAKER

THE MAN IN WHITE

**Extraordinary Accounts of the Intervening
Power of the Living God**

Ernest F. Crocker MD



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I dedicate this book to my wonderful family.
To my wife, Lynne, to my daughter, Sascha and sons Brook and
Sam. They have been a tower of strength to me over the years.
Together, we have known the power, the presence and
the purpose of God in every life situation.

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Most of all my thanks to God for providing these remarkable testimonies. These are stories that unless recorded may have been lost forever. Testimonies are prophetic. They relate what God has done, what He is doing and what He may do in the future. I have not pursued these stories, rather, He has entrusted them to me and in so doing has introduced me to remarkable people and given me a deeper understanding of His grace.

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Preface

Last night I questioned God. My certainties had been challenged. I stood in darkness, very much alone, gazing into the night sky. 'I need an answer, God,' I said. 'I need to hear Your voice.' But nothing came.

The next morning, I awoke early. The rising sun cast a golden glow on the water. I hurried to the lake's edge, camera in hand. Clouds lit by early rays reflected in the still waters. Then, all at once, approaching thunder. Storm clouds were rolling in behind me from the west. The thunder became louder and louder and rain began to fall. But as I watched, the storm passed, the rain ceased. I looked behind and a rainbow had formed. It was directly over my home and dipped to touch the roof line. As His child, I experienced the power of His presence, I heard His voice, and I wept.

Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

John 12:21 (NKJV)

Introduction

*Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
– But who is that on the other side of you?
T.S. Eliot, ‘The Waste Land’¹*

On the afternoon of 20 May 1916, three bearded men stepped out from a frozen wilderness. Their wild appearance sent two small boys running. The men entered the hillside manager’s office of the whaling station at Stromness, on the island of South Georgia. What ensued was described by a man called Mansell, who witnessed the scene.

‘Manager say: “Who the hell are you?” and terrible bearded man in the centre of the three say very quietly: “My name is Shackleton.” Me – I turn away and weep. I think manager weep too.’²

In his book *South*, Shackleton later confessed that he had no doubt that Providence had guided him and his men across the snow and across the ‘storm-white’ sea separating Elephant Island from South Georgia. ‘During that long and racking march of thirty-six hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia’, he said, ‘it seemed to me often that we were four, not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterwards Worsley said to me, “Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us.” Crean confessed to the same idea. One feels “the dearth of human words, the roughness of mortal speech” in trying to describe

things intangible, but a record of our journeys would be incomplete without a reference to a subject very near to our hearts.³

This experience so challenged T.S. Eliot at the time, that he referred to it in his poem, 'The Waste Land'. Eliot wrote of the 'third man'; Shackleton, of the fourth.

Shackleton, later reflecting on past events would write: 'We had suffered, starved and triumphed, grovelled down yet grasped at glory, grown bigger in the bigness of the whole. We had seen God in his splendours, heard the text that nature renders. We had reached the naked soul of man.'⁴

I have known a similar experience. Some years back I was invited with several close friends to speak at a medical seminar program in China. I had packed bundles of Christian literature, 'just in case'. These included copies of the Gospel of John in the new script, and of a book of daily devotions much sought after in China at the time, called *Streams in the Desert*.⁵

It was a hot, steamy August evening, as we clambered down the metal steps onto the tarmac at Guangzhou airport. Strains of martial music wafted across the tarmac from a public address system somewhere in the void, and the half-light revealed armed soldiers guarding several planes.

We were escorted with our luggage into a reception hall where unsmiling immigration officers checked our visas and, high on the wall, an enormous portrait of Mao Tse-tung, the great helmsman, watched over all. We walked a gauntlet of red-starred customs officers who silently scrutinized our every step, but at no time challenged me or examined my luggage. As we did so, there was the strong impression that we were being escorted. I was later to learn that, at that very moment, my wife, Lynne, with friends back in Sydney, had been praying for our safe passage. As she prayed, she had a vision of us being led through that room by a man in bright apparel. We had seen nothing.

There is an insatiable hunger in the soul of man for relationship with a creator God.⁶ Nothing else will suffice. This may be expressed in terms of faith, hope and sometimes exasperation. Other times it may be expressed as a barrage of arguments against the existence of

God by those not willing to expose their souls and submit themselves to His grace, yet reluctant to exclude the one who can bring meaning and hope to their existence.

Many people today are aware of the historical Jesus. They are familiar with His life, His times and teaching, yet fail to know Him on a meaningful basis. There are few who are able to relate personally to Jesus as Saviour, to God as a loving father, and to the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus when He said: 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.'⁷

So many of us want to see Jesus. So many of us want to hear His voice. So many have longed and prayed for a tangible, palpable experience of God, no matter how transient, no matter how lateral that experience might prove to be. 'If only I could touch Him, if only I could see His face,' we say. Yet Jesus said, 'blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'⁸

As a Christian doctor, as a follower of Jesus, I have been a witness to His interventions throughout much of my life. I have seen miracles; I have seen prayers answered and prophecies fulfilled. I have experienced his direction through His Word, in dreams and by His still, quiet voice within. I have verified the words of C.S. Lewis that 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.'⁹

I now regard myself as an ambassador for Christ and have taken the stance of Luke the physician to provide an 'orderly account'¹⁰ of those things that I have observed in my own life and witnessed in the lives of others.

There follow stories of an extraordinary, disparate band of people from all walks of life who have experienced God's intervention in the most remarkable circumstances. They include professionals, academics, a train robber, a surgeon facing decapitation for his faith, a Christian songwriter and those who have escaped the ravages of war. I have interviewed each one and verified their stories. Many are personal friends. Each has proven for themselves the truth of the words: 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.'¹¹

Do you dare to ask those same questions?

On 25 February 2006 Lynne and I entered Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds on the western extremity of Ross Island, Antarctica. As it had been in 1908, so it was 98 years later. Food and provisions were preserved. Medical and surgical supplies were apparent. Clothes, though frozen, were hung out to dry. The same God who later accompanied Shackleton and his men across the ice was present then and is with us today.

This book is written at a time of great challenge. The Covid-19 pandemic has claimed one quarter of a million lives in just a few months, more than 30,000 in the United Kingdom alone. We reach out to God in enduring prayer, to one who cares, to the one who can lead us through. After all, his Word tells us that we have an unshakeable kingdom. And just as Ernest Henry Shackleton experienced the presence of God during his journey, so may we. It is of interest that he lived by his family motto: *fortitudine vincimus*, by endurance we conquer.¹² My late father was named Ernest Henry after Shackleton and an integral part of my heritage has been to know a daily walk with my Father God. Will you come with me?

Ernest Frank Crocker
Castle Hill, 11 May 2020

'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' . . . we also believe and therefore speak.¹³

The Still Small Voice

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 10:27 (NKJV)

A more disparate group of medical graduates had rarely graced the main entrance to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, arguably the finest teaching hospital in the city of Sydney on the day.

Some wore suits and ties; others were more casually attired. Some were bearded with shoulder-length hair and granny glasses, others closely shaven. The young women dressed conservatively.

Having completed at least six years of medical training and successfully met the challenge of final exams, they gathered for the next stage of their medical careers, and perhaps the most gruelling: internship. They would work a strict one-in-two roster, rarely finishing duties before 10 p.m. and would be challenged on every front. They would witness pain as never before, be confronted with the realities of life, death and loss, and learn to accept the responsibilities of the new identity thrust upon them as 'doctor'. Some would fail miserably; others would go on to realize their life's ambition. They were insecure and uncertain but filled with expectation. At least a quarter of them had been conscripted to serve in Vietnam and were awaiting their call-up papers. I was one of them.

It was the second week of January 1970, a turbulent time in Australian history. The war in Vietnam was ramping up. Nixon would soon announce expansion of hostilities into Cambodia. Students were

in a state of unrest as they and their friends were pressed into service, in a war regarded by many as unjust and unwarranted. Drug use was rampant and 'free love' destabilized meaningful relationships. Songs of the day were 'Bridge Over Troubled Water', 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother' and of course the student anthem: 'Give Peace a Chance'. My wife to be, Lynne, was studying fine art at East Sydney Tech at the time and, as many others, had been caught up in the anti-war movement. She would soon add her voice to the thousands of demonstrators voicing their disapproval publicly outside the Sydney Town Hall.

As I stood there, bathed by the warmth of the morning sun, I happened to glance down at words written on the foundation stone to my left.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.¹

The words took me back to a Saturday evening in my early teens; I had been out running and as I did so, there came the strongest conviction that one day I would practise medicine. I had no doubt that this was of God, but it was not until I glanced down at those words rendered in stone that I understood that the prophecy was fulfilled.

God speaks to us in many ways: through His written Word, by circumstance, through the words of others, by dreams and visions. Occasionally He may speak audibly. This has not been my personal experience but is evident throughout the Scriptures and has been experienced by some of my most trusted friends. Most commonly I find that He speaks by that 'still small voice'² which cannot be denied. That day on the hospital steps, despite the busyness and distraction, He spoke directly to me. It was a voice that I would hear many times over the years. It was a voice that would lead me through the maelstrom of internship, residency, and beyond.

I began to understand that day, that when God speaks to us, He often initiates a conversation, a dialogue that may continue over decades. Forty-five years ago last month, I challenged God as to whether He heals in this modern age. I was in residency at the time and had

passed the written and oral exams for acceptance as a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. I had been a follower of Jesus since childhood and had experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But I was unable to reconcile my medical studies with the concept that God might intervene today in the healing process.

‘If you heal today,’ I said, ‘you must prove it to me within the next seven days otherwise I will lay the matter to rest and move on with my medical career.’ Looking back, my brazenness at the time astounds me. However, I now understand that God is big enough to cope with my foolishness and gracious to meet me at my point of need. Billy Graham spoke of an atheist who stood in a thunderstorm, arms outstretched, challenging God to strike him dead. After several minutes, drenched to the skin but unhurt he announced to all around that God was indeed dead. A man watching from nearby exclaimed that he misunderstood God; that the patience of God extended beyond a matter of minutes.

The next evening, I found myself unexpectedly covering an emergency after hours’ medical service for a friend who was indisposed. Just after midnight, I was called to the home of a woman in Hurlstone Park in Sydney’s inner west, who gave all the symptoms of acute myocardial infarction.³ ‘Please come quickly, doctor,’ she said. ‘I have terrible pains in the chest.’

I hurried to her home but within fifteen minutes of arriving she suffered a cardiac arrest. The situation was desperate. The room was dimly lit, the patient was sprawled across a single bed with a sagging mattress. I pulled her to the floor and began resuscitation. Despite all my best efforts, which included CPR,⁴ and finally, in desperation, intracardiac adrenaline by means of a large spinal needle, she died. Her pupils became fixed and dilated.

It was then that I heard that still small voice which I shall always recognise as the voice of God. ‘Now is the time. Now is the time.’ The words were not audible but sounded loud in my spirit. Kneeling at her side on the bedroom floor, my hands still on her chest, I prayed for her. Her whole body shuddered but then, nothing. The ambulance driver was delayed. It seems that he had misplaced details of the call,

but finally arrived and confirmed that the patient was deceased. But we loaded her into the ambulance and sped off to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, sirens and flashing lights all the way. The emergency staff had been alerted and were waiting in the ambulance bay. After cursory examination they confirmed that the patient was dead and suggested that she be taken to the mortuary at the rear of the hospital.

However, as these doctors were my friends, I managed to persuade them to admit her to the Emergency Department (ED) and stood back as they recommenced CPR. To my astonishment within five minutes she registered a normal sinus rhythm on ECG.⁵ She then regained consciousness and complained of chest pain, which I suspect related to several broken ribs. By that stage she had been pulseless for approximately an hour.

I was astounded. It was a surreal situation for which I had no explanation apart from that of God's intervention.

Mrs Mac was admitted under Professor Blackburn in ward BP2 where I visited her the next morning. I found her fully conscious and alert with a normal cardiogram. She was eating a full breakfast and reading a women's magazine. She was discharged with no final diagnosis after two days of observation and a bank of diagnostic tests. On questioning, she had no memory of the events beyond suffering chest pain at home.

At no stage did I discuss the case of Mrs Mac with Professor Blackburn. However, subsequent to that time, he gave me every support and was instrumental in assisting me to obtain New South Wales State Cancer Council and Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) scholarships to further my research into brain imaging at the University of Pennsylvania a few years later.

I have pondered this remarkable healing event over many years and come to regard it as a 'gift of faith' to me during a time of deep questioning. It has become an Ebenezer, a landmark in my life that will always remind me of God's continuing presence.⁶ However, just yesterday, as I recalled the words that God had spoken to me those years ago as I attempted to resuscitate Mrs Mac, He spoke once again in that still small voice: 'If I can raise a woman from the dead, I can do anything.'

I am now aware that His intervention at the time was prophetic in terms of clearly stating what He was able to do both then, now, and in the years ahead.

Professor Charles Bickerton Blackburn (affectionately known as 'Blackie') died last year at age 102. As a young doctor, I had been totally in awe of the man. His quick wit, encyclopaedic mind and extraordinary deductive powers were a constant source of fascination. I recall one grand round when a senior physician was presenting a case for discussion. Summing up, he said, 'I believe that this is a case of polyarteritis nodosa, or something.'

'Yes, I agree,' said Blackie.

'Polyarteritis nodosa?' said the physician, glad to have found support.

'No, something,' said Blackie.

Each one of us has a deep longing to hear the voice of God. We have called to Him in moments of desperation, we have waited upon Him in times of need and uncertainty. The wonderful news is this. He does hear our cry for help and He always answers, most often in ways that we might not expect. As you read this book you may regard it as a pilgrimage of discovery. There will be ideas, concepts and experiences that you may not have previously considered and may not fully understand. But take courage, be vigilant. It has been said that 'understanding makes the mind lazy'⁷ and with God there is always something new, some new challenge, something wonderful to explore. Always, a step of faith is required. But a caution, do not expect to find God in your journey, unless you take Him with you. Keep an open mind and allow Him to reveal Himself and His ways to you.

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

Isaiah 55:8,9



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