



January 2012

Dear Friend and Partner of PTM,

*At the Gate of the Year*

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,  
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”  
And he replied, “Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God.  
That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.”*  
King George VI—Christmas speech to the British Empire, December 1939.

As a result of the Academy Award-winning movie, *The King's Speech*, the life and times of King George VI became widely known. Some eleven months ago *The King's Speech* swept many honors, including Best Picture of the Year at the 2011 Academy Awards ceremonies. If you have already seen this must-see movie (caution: Given some of its language, it's not a family movie), you will recall that it begins its story during the last days of King George V and the relationship he had with two of his three sons, Edward and Albert. In the years leading up to World War II the health of King George V was deteriorating, even while Hitler's Germany was a growing threat for England and all of Europe.

*The King's Speech* depicts the later years of King George V as a time when he became increasingly alienated from his eldest son, Edward, who, upon the death of his father, briefly reigned as King Edward VIII. To the disappointment of his father, the charming and good-looking Edward lived a life of excess, including affairs with many married women. The most scandalous of all his affairs was his relationship with Wallis Simpson, a married American woman. On the other hand, as his life slowly ebbed away from a long term illness, King George V became closer and closer to his second eldest, Prince Albert (affectionately known to his father as *Bertie*), and to Albert's oldest daughter, Elizabeth (whom her grandfather affectionately called *Lilibet*). In turn, Lilibet called her grandfather *Grandpa England*. When her father King George VI died in 1952, Lilibet became the present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II.

Early in *The King's Speech* the trauma and shame Prince Albert lived with is vividly portrayed through a humiliating speech he delivered in 1925. The failure of that speech motivated him to begin a 14-year-long relationship with an unorthodox Australian speech therapist, as Albert struggled to overcome his stammering and stuttering. Before being thrust into the limelight as King George VI, Albert lived life in the shadow of his older, more popular brother Edward. Albert was frightened by his father, who favored, as most parents of that era did, a strict and somewhat unforgiving parenting style. His early fears and estrangement from his father were, no doubt, contributing factors to the speech defect he developed as a young boy, and that continued to plague him.

In January 1936 King George V died and his eldest son took the name of King Edward VIII as he assumed the throne. However, given his insistence, against British law, of marrying Wallace Spencer, a twice-divorced American, King Edward VIII was forced to abdicate the throne in December 1936, after a reign of only 325 days. In so doing King Edward VIII obligated his brother Albert, who suffered from ill health—including chronic stomach problems and ulcers, as well as his struggle with stuttering—to assume the throne. When Edward VIII abdicated, he not only weakened public respect for the monarchy, but he effectively deserted his people when they needed him most. The storm clouds of war were gathering over Europe—it had only been 20 years since World War I, the presumed “war to end all wars.” Albert reluctantly became King George VI.

As King George VI, Albert knew he would be called on to speak regularly at ceremonial occasions, as well as times when he addressed the nation and the empire. Because he believed his people needed a King who could speak convincingly and without stammering he was determined to overcome his stuttering. *The King's Speech* concludes with a speech, free of stuttering, given by King George VI on September 3, 1939. On September 1, Germany had invaded Poland. Germany refused to back down or remove its troops, so Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, who had promised his people “peace in our time” now knew that war was inevitable. On September 3, 1939, Chamberlain announced that Great Britain was now at war with Germany—the Prime Minister’s announcement was followed by the King’s speech, which offered encouragement to his disheartened and troubled people.

### **The Other King's Speech**

In 1932 King George V had reluctantly agreed to deliver a Royal Christmas speech on the radio (then called the *wireless*). The Royal Christmas Speech quickly became an annual tradition, and yet another occasion when King George

VI would be expected to address his subjects. He had just given his speech announcing war with Germany three months earlier, and now, once again, in December 1939, he was called on to inspire his people. During the three-month period between the two speeches, the mood in England had become even more grim and dismal. It was an ominous time in England, as hundreds of thousands of children were uprooted and evacuated away from their families (living in urban population centers sure to be targets of Nazi bombing raids) to the relative safety of the sparsely populated countryside. Everyone was concerned about the future. Could England withstand Nazi bombs? Could England stave off the totalitarian evils of Hitler?

King George VI was no stranger to endurance and overcoming. Though he was a “royal” and had grown up with luxuries, he had struggled with fear, shame and embarrassment all his life. In this second critically important speech within three months, he once again rallied his people. As an impending sense of doom pervaded England, and as fears of an uncertain future overwhelmed a nation, in his Royal Christmas speech of 1939 King George VI cited a poem titled *God Knows*. His wife, the mother of the current Queen Elizabeth II, known as the Queen Mother at the time of her death in 2002, had given him a book of poetry by a relatively unknown poet named Minnie Louise Haskins. The speech, and the poem, has come to be known popularly as *At the Gate of the Year*—based on one of its memorable lines.

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,  
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”  
And he replied, “Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God.  
That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.”*

As we look forward into 2012, these words which heartened the British people as they looked into the darkness of 1940 and beyond can inspire and focus our thoughts. We remember the words of Isaiah, as he foretold the Light of Christ, who came to lead us into the unknown:

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.—Isaiah 9:2*

Isaiah continues, in verse six:

*For unto us a son is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

As you receive this letter we stand at the gate of a New Year. Traditionally,

this is a time when many people think about their New Year's resolutions. Many see a New Year as a gateway to a time when they will give up something and start something else. New Year's resolutions are notoriously centered on external and material characteristics and circumstances—on things like a new diet, better health and increased financial stability.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with New Year's resolutions, this year, *At the Gate of the Year*, **more than any other resolution we make, we must put our hand in the hand of God—for he alone can take us safely into the unknown.** The Light of Christ is better than any and all human sources of illumination. As fearful and troubled as we may be, this is a time to implicitly trust in God. This New Year, though fears are everywhere, though war and famine and misery stalk this planet earth, *At the Gate of the Year* let us put our hand in the hand of God and walk in the Light of Christ. **We will not find the answer for our fears and worries on Wall Street or at Wal-Mart.** The money we have in banks or stocks will not save us—shopping away our fears, by acquiring more and more stuff is not the answer!

This New Year, *At the Gate of the Year*, let us remember:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.—Proverbs 3:5-6*

As Friends and Partners of PTM, as we begin this New Year, we do so in faith, trusting that God will 1) provide for us, and more than that, 2) enable us to continue this ongoing work of service to so many around this world, who are in desperate need of the hand of God and the Light of Christ. To help you begin this New Year focused on Jesus Christ we're offering a wonderful pamphlet by Dallas Willard called *The Transformed Heart*. Supplies are limited—please return the enclosed card as soon as possible to receive your copy. May God grant each of you his peace and rest in Christ, as you face the challenges of this New Year.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries