

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

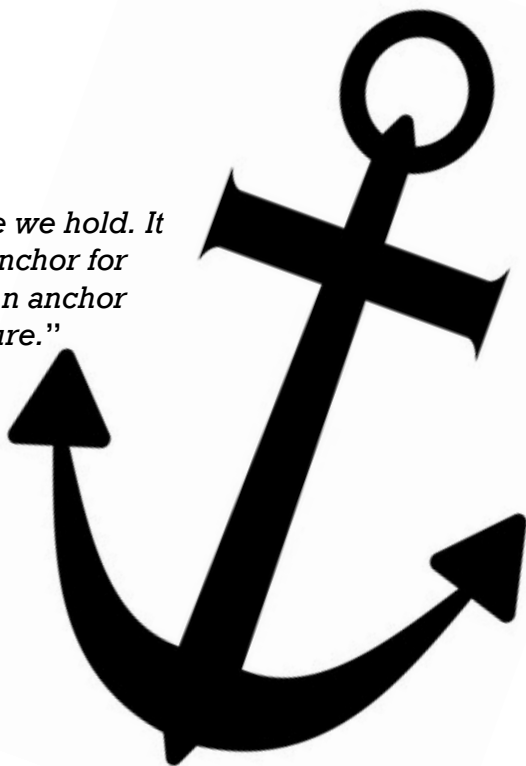
Volume 98 Issue 5

September / October 2021

“That hope we hold. It is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure.”

Heb. 6:19

NEB



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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV)

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Shipping problems came into view on 23 March this year when the 'Ever Given' got stuck in the Suez canal blocking traffic coming through that canal from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. This canal saves two weeks of travel time from the East to Europe.

We all have the need of an anchor especially in this increasingly uncertain world. We can take courage from those like Esther, queen of Persia and Mordecai, who were able to stand firm and save their nation in the Persian empire.

At present the world in which we live is imperfect because of the permission of evil which enables us to understand why things are the way they are but we know a better time is coming when the completed church begins its reign and when Satan is bound. (Rev. 20)

Meanwhile we can grow closer in our relationship with our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as described by the Song of Solomon, with the church as the 'maiden' and our Lord as the 'beloved'. The focus of the church in these times as much as any is to reach the measure of the fulness of Christ in a time when faith in God is overlooked and increasingly considered as old-fashioned in places like Britain.

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." (2 Cor. 1:20)

WE HAVE AN ANCHOR

“That...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” (Heb. 6:18-19)

Anchors are very important to ship safety. They hold the ship steady especially at the commencement and end of a sea voyage. Many ships were saved from rocks close to the shore by the use of anchors. It is hard to imagine the days before steam power and modern forms of ship power how commercial vessels navigated from one port to another using sails or oars. William the only legitimate son of Henry I of England died crossing the channel in 1120. Even today ships run aground and people die at sea. The power of the sea is not to be underestimated.

But anchors are useless without strong cables and a suitable seabed in order to deploy the anchor to good effect. All anchors need ‘anchor rode’ to link the anchor to the ship or boat. Larger vessels have mostly chains, but smaller vessels may have nylon rope or hemp as it was in the old days. These connectors have to be heavy to avoid nearby vessels and not get damaged by coral or rocks. Hemp can rot. But without the anchor rode the anchor is useless to the vessel. There are all sorts of sea-beds into which an anchor can be deployed; it makes a difference if it is rocky, sandy or clay.

In the Old Testament Jonah is well-known for being caught in a storm at sea. The crew were throwing objects off the ship to lighten the load before Jonah was cast into the sea to save the vessel and crew.

The apostle Paul was shipwrecked three times. (2 Cor. 11:25) There is one desperate account in Acts 27 when Paul was being taken to Rome to be tried by Caesar. He left the promised land and headed along the coast between Cyprus and modern-day Turkey, then made the way toward Crete sailing to the south of that large Mediterranean island. Paul advised staying there. His advice was ignored. Big mistake. They travelled on toward Rome. The problem was a storm came up which lasted 14 days and they needed to throw off the cargo and some of the rigging. Suddenly Paul got a message from an angel that they would all make it safely to shore, but the ship would be lost. So as they got closer to shore they cut the anchors and made for land. The vessel was lost, and they were forced to spend time in Malta. It just goes to show how dangerous shipping could be in New Testament times.

Hebrews 6:13-19 states that, hope is the anchor, for the Christian. This shows the import of hope to Christians past and present. Imagine being without hope, true hope, and it is true because as the writer to the Hebrews says, “it is impossible for God to lie.” But what is the exact hope in?

The Abrahamic promise

Hebrews tells us “God made a promise to Abraham...saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you’.” (vv. 13-14 NKJV) Other verses in Genesis expand upon this to say, in Abraham and his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:2-3; 22:17-18) This is from Abraham and Sarah themselves because the seed was not through Hagar, Sarah’s servant, but through Abraham’s wife Sarah. (Gen. 17:15-19; Rom. 9:9) This seed will bless the whole world population.

A miracle would be needed to bring the start of this hope into reality. As Abraham and Sarah were 100 and 90 years old respectively and neither were fertile and past a time when fertility was to be expected. Added to that they had been childless all their married life. But so it was as God had promised, through faith Sarah conceived and gave birth to her only child. (Heb. 11:11) His name was Isaac, and he was weaned and grew.

There was one notable event in the life of Abraham and Isaac where they were to exhibit faith and figure an event many years ahead. God told Abraham to take Isaac up to Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering. So the two of them went together and on the third day could see their destination. They prepared the wood and Isaac asked his father “where is the lamb for the offering”? So Abraham took Isaac, bound him, and laid him on the altar. But where was hope in this event and for what reason would God make this request and expect it to be carried out?

We all know what happened next before Isaac could be killed. God provided a ram. And because Abraham did not withhold his only begotten son (Gen. 22:16) the promise was renewed because of the faith and actions of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham knowing by faith it was possible for God to raise the dead. (Heb. 11:17-19)

What does this promise to the seed mean to later generations and to us? In due time Jesus was born to Mary who was descended from Abraham and Isaac. Likewise Joseph was also descended from Abraham. Also like Isaac, Jesus offered himself to the Heavenly Father but no ram was provided to take his place. Gal. 3:29 is quite clear, if you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. This means

not only was our Lord Jesus Abraham's seed but that the Gospel age church, regardless of whether they are biologically or legally from Abraham. (Gal. 3:16) The hope of the promise continues with Christians today.

Hope

What kind of hope was in the mind of the writer to the Hebrews? Collins Dictionary defines hope as a feeling of desire and expectation that things go well in the future. There is a saying that there are two certain things in life; death and taxes. Here hope is in relation to life after death. Peter wrote of a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible reserved in heaven for the Christian. (1 Pet. 1:3-5) Paul describes this hope of the saints as "Christ in you the hope of glory" in relation to this heavenly hope. (Col. 1:27) This hope is steadfast and sure.

The Abrahamic promise gave hope to Abraham and Sarah but importantly to everyone. First was the need to identify the seed figured in Isaac but revealed in the Lord Jesus. All our hopes are centred in Jesus as the son of God who would bless the world. To date we only see shadows of the blessing of all the families of the earth and in faith we await that time of worldwide blessing. Also in the Old Testament Job had a hope that at the appointed time he would be remembered and come forth to life once more. (Job 14:13-15; 19:25)

Our Lord Jesus taught of the resurrection of the dead for all. (John 5:25,28) Paul spoke up to the Sanhedrin of the hope of the resurrection and then in front of a Roman governor both for the just and unjust, (Acts 24:15) and was unequivocal that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)

Faith and hope

Faith is the substance of things *hoped* for the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) Faith is linked to hope. In this picture there is the cable or anchor rode that attaches the vessel to the anchor otherwise it might be like a coin tossed into a fountain.

As its been noted, by faith Sarah conceived and gave birth to her only child at the age of 90. Likewise by faith Abraham left Ur and later offered up Isaac.

Ground

So we have our anchor and a good cable but where are we deploying it. In some places and times depending on the wind and current it may not stay in place. If it is put down to a rocky seabed it may not be secure. Similarly on a sandy seabed the anchor will drag according to the power of the current and tide. However on a clay seabed the anchor will bury and get a good grip. An anchor is shaped in a certain way so that the more its pulled on the deeper it grips.

On what grounds do we have our faith? The Bible furnishes many signs and miracles that give a basis to our faith. In the Old Testament Jonah was in peril at sea. He was thrown overboard and miraculously survived three days in the body of the whale before being deposited back close to the shore to begin God's mission for him in Nineveh. Think of the many miracles that Jesus did? The feeding of the five thousand, the raising of Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son and not forgetting Lazarus. Most important is the resurrection of Jesus by the Heavenly Father, he was seen by many people, even 500 at one time. (1 Cor. 15:6)

This surely is a reminder of the Parable of the wise and foolish builders. (Matt. 7:24-27) The builder that constructed his house on the rock stood firm despite the rain, floods and winds and the house on the sand fell down. Peter understood that Jesus was the son of God and on that key doctrine a church could be built, beginning with Israel and after to all countries. Paul also indicated the import of building on the rock which is Jesus Christ with gold, silver and precious stones rather than with wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Cor. 3:11-12) But what is the sand or the wood, hay, and stubble? Could it be building with traditions and individual wishes?

Danger of Judaizers

Paul wrote to the brethren in the ecclesia in Galatia and one of his messages was to warn them against developing themselves under the old Law Covenant by circumcision of the flesh and through food and drink observance, rather than by faith in Christ Jesus. Hence by the use of the figures of Sarah and Hagar in Gal. 3, he likened Hagar to those operating in bondage to the Law Covenant and Sarah to those who are according to the promise, which is by faith in Christ Jesus.

Storms of life

We cannot escape life's difficulties which like weather can change according to the season and day-to-day, be it drought, heatwave, thunderstorms, and floods, or even snow and ice. In the spiritual life there

can be trials of faith. Wind can figure war. There is the expression “the winds of war.” Some lost their faith during the two World Wars of the last century, especially the first one when men were sent from both sides urged on by many preachers from the pulpit to fight for king and country only to witness great slaughter or lose their lives in foreign fields.

Daniel had conflict in his life which forced him into the lions’ den. In Daniel 6 King Darius of the Medes and Persians was tricked by some of his ministers into making a law that no one was to worship anyone but him for 30 days. Darius did not realise that the trap was for Daniel who worshipped Yahweh God and the law of the Medes and Persians made it impossible to change the law. Daniel openly prayed and worshipped God and was therefore thrown into the lions’ den. However Daniel had faith that God could save him and was delivered to the joy of King Darius. Daniel’s accusers were then cast into that den and were torn into pieces.

In summary the scriptures state there is hope in the Christian message through faith and it is an anchor for the Christian every day. We see the import of hope and the saving power of faith. It’s not possible to save ourselves on our own and live eternally in health and good circumstances, but we have to have a good cable and place our anchor in a secure place not merely any place, which sustains us through the trials of life and leads us to the heavenly shore. .

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” (Heb. 11:6)

NAC



HEMP

A plant of the nettle family, growing abundantly in tropical countries, and cultivated for a valuable fibre contained in its bark. This fibre, which is obtained by maceration, is tough and strong, and is largely used for rope-making and in manufacturing coarse fabrics. The seed yields a valuable oil, and is also largely used as bird food.

Pears Cyclopaedia

ESTHER, QUEEN OF PERSIA

The story of the Jewish maiden who became wife to one of the most powerful kings of antiquity, and thereby the means of delivering her nation from wholesale massacre, is unique in the Old Testament in that nowhere in the narrative is the name of God mentioned, neither is there any indication of prayer to him or faith in him for deliverance, nor yet is He credited with any part in effecting the deliverance. Many suggestions and theories have been propounded to account for this unusual factor in this particular book, but when they have all been stated the fact remains that of all the women of faith who figure in Bible history Esther stands in a class by herself as one who gives no indication of her personal standing with God, and yet undeniably was used by him to effect a great deliverance.

Esther was a city girl, born and bred in Shushan the capital of the Persian empire four generations after the Jews were taken captive into Babylon. The decree of Cyrus, permitting all who so desired to return to the land of their fathers, was fifty years in the past and the restoration of the land of Judah was in progress. Esther's family and forebears had not seen fit to return: perhaps they considered themselves better off in prosperous Persia. Maybe the opposition and terrorist tactics which the colonists in Judea were experiencing from alien peoples in neighbouring lands deterred them from sharing the risks and fortunes of the pioneers. The situation in Judah was very much as it is in the same land today. At any rate, it would seem that Esther grew up in an atmosphere of Jewish nationalism and the Jewish faith against the background of a Gentile land, and her religious outlook must have been moulded thereby. The name of no great man of faith of the period is known—Daniel had been dead for half a century, Ezra, away in Babylon, was at the most a child of a few years old, and Nehemiah, the coming patriot, not yet born. The only name we have is that of Mordecai, Esther's cousin, who had cared for her since she was orphaned, and of his attitude towards God we have no knowledge either.

The king of Persia at the time was the famous—or rather infamous—Xerxes, weak, dissolute, ruthless, cruel, altogether unprincipled and probably half mad. The incidents and allusions appearing in the Book of Esther fit so closely into the events of this man's reign that there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identification. The Artaxerxes under whom Nehemiah served was Xerxes' son and successor and this provides an additional evidence. When one compares the account of Xerxes' reign in

Herodotus, the Greek historian, who lived only a few decades later, with the character of the king displayed in the Biblical Book it is easy to believe that both accounts refer to one and the same man. (“Ahasuerus” in the Book of Esther is the Hebrew form of the Persian Khshayarsha of which the Greek form is Xerxes).

It was to this monster that the Jewish girl, probably no more than sixteen years of age, was unwillingly to yield herself. There was no choice in the matter and any objections would be brusquely overruled. The kings of Persia arrogated to themselves the right to take into their harems any unmarried woman in the realm they wished. Xerxes exercised his rights to the full and in addition to his principal wife, who enjoyed the dignity of Queen, he also maintained a harem of three hundred of the most beautiful women in the land. But now his Queen had incurred his displeasure and been degraded to a lower position, and the great king was in the market for a new Queen. Apparently none of the current three hundred appealed to his probably somewhat jaded palate and his sycophantic courtiers suggested that perhaps the time was ripe for a fresh sweep through the empire in search of new candidates.

Esther was unfortunate enough to be caught in this round-up. There was nothing her guardian could do about it, but he did charge her not to reveal the fact that she was a Jewess. This is a little difficult to understand. There was no particular antipathy against the Jews in the Persian empire at the time; the fact that they were monotheists like the Persians was rather to their favour compared with the polytheistic Babylonians whom Persia had conquered in the days of Cyrus. If Esther’s nationality was likely to be a bar to her being taken into the harem of Xerxes one would think that Mordecai would have revealed the fact immediately. Taken in conjunction with the further behaviour of Mordecai later on, it could be surmised that he might not have been altogether averse to his ward becoming more closely connected with the king, as a possible means of serving his own personal ambition. Upon the other hand, it might only have been that Mordecai, knowing how swiftly the tide of popular feeling could turn against the Jews, and realising that from now on he could do nothing to protect his young cousin, considered it better that no one in the royal court should have any suspicion of her national origin.

So Esther was taken to the royal palace and assigned her place in the “house of the women,” a luxurious building the ruins of which still exist amongst the complex of broken-down walls and standing pillars, fragments of sculpture and tiled pavements, which is all that is left of the

magnificent palace of the Persian kings at Shushan, now known as Persepolis. The whole area was excavated during the years 1931-1939 and the great throne room where Esther stood with her royal husband, the Hall of One Hundred Columns, an immense apartment over two hundred and thirty feet square, can still be traced by bits of broken wall and pavements. Pieces of the wall panels of multi-coloured enamelled and glazed bricks, arranged in ornate designs, still remain to give mute evidence to the accuracy of the description in Esther 1:6. And here Esther had to spend a probationary period of twelve months before she would be called into the presence of the king.

The first real picture of Esther we have comes at this point. The eunuch who had charge of the harem—an important and trusted official—took an instant liking to the Jewish maiden and immediately promoted her to a leading place among her companions, giving her seven handmaids as personal attendants and the best quarters he had at his disposal. It is probable that the king relied upon his judgment a great deal and that he was impressed by a non-assuming modesty and quiet dignity which may have distinguished Esther above the others. And this impression may well have been advanced when Esther, called at last into the king's presence, instead of claiming for herself, as was apparently the custom, every conceivable aid to attractiveness in the way of clothing or jewellery that could be suggested, was content to be arrayed according to the eunuch's judgment. When she was ready, she "*obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.*" (Est. 2:15)

She might have been several years at the palace awaiting this moment, for the king had been away for two years fighting the Greeks. The great feast described in the first chapter as taking place in the third year of his reign was evidently in connection with an important council of all his nobles and generals held in that year in which Xerxes planned the invasion of Greece as a preliminary to his projected conquest of Europe. (Xerxes was nothing if not ambitious and never erred on the side of modesty, as witness one of his inscriptions found at Shushan; "*I am Xerxes, the great king, the only king, the king of all countries which speak all kinds of languages, the king of this entire big and far-reaching earth*"). His plans laid, he set out with a vast army and a great fleet of war-galleys, drawn from all the countries of his empire, built a bridge of boats across the Hellespont (near the modern Dardanelles) to convey his forces into Europe, and so marched into Greece. The Greek war-galleys were outnumbered three to one, but at the memorable naval battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. the Persian fleet was completely destroyed, and on land the

Greeks defeated and decimated the invaders. Xerxes left his most able general, Mardonius, to hold back the enemy whilst he himself with a few picked troops fled back to Persia as fast as he could, two years after he so boastfully set out. Comparison of Herodotus with the Book of Esther shows that Esther was probably brought into his presence about a month after his return to Shushan.

The king was captivated by this young maiden, more so than by any of the others who had been collected for him, and immediately chose her to replace the discarded Vashti. So, in the seventh year of the king's reign, Esther became Queen of Persia, an exalted position which would probably have separated her for ever from her own people and had no place in the outworking purposes of God had it not been for the machinations of Haman.

Haman was an influential noble at Court who had contrived to become the king's right-hand man. He was ambitious, arrogant, and an enemy of the Jews. Arising from the consistent refusal of Mordecai to pay him the deference shown by others he conceived the idea of destroying the entire Jewish community in the Persian empire. He obtained the king's permission quite easily and the decree went forth throughout the empire, naming a day twelve months hence when the carnage should commence. In the ensuing consternation and distress Mordecai appealed to Esther to use her influence with the king to have the decree rescinded. Esther at first was hesitant; to go to the king uninvited was to risk death unless he should extend his sceptre towards the applicant, indicating his favour, "*and I*" said Esther, "*have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.*" (4:11 RSV) It may have been that, after five years as Queen, the notoriously fickle Xerxes was beginning again to look elsewhere. At any rate Esther was apprehensive of her personal safety if she interfered.

Mordecai was not prepared to tolerate this. "*Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews*" he told her sternly "*for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall perish: and who knowest whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" (4:13-14 RV) That last phrase is the nearest approach to any consciousness of Divine oversight and power that appears in this book, and even then it may be questioned whether Mordecai had any thought of Divine overruling in his mind. It is noteworthy that all the transactions which appear in the story seem to be on the basis of human effort and power and no indication of prayer or

faith in time of need is given. Esther's response bears this out. She told Mordecai to go back to his fellows and get them to engage in a three days' fast; she with her attendants would do the same, and then she would take her life in her hands and intrude upon the presence of the king uninvited; "*and if I perish, I perish.*" (v.16) It does not sound like the assurance of faith neither does it seem that the Queen felt she had a Protector whose power exceeded even that of the king of Persia. Joseph stood before Pharaoh of Egypt and Daniel before King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, and these were comparable occasions to this one, but those men both prepared themselves beforehand by prayer and supplication to God and then appeared before their respective monarchs in serene confidence that God was with them and would direct the issue. There is no evidence that Queen Esther felt like that. It looks almost as if she relied upon women's wiles, arraying herself in her royal apparel and appearing before the king in as alluring a fashion as possible, rather than believe that help could come from above.

The great king was in a good mood that day. At sight of his Queen he extended the sceptre, permitting her to approach, and even before she had time to introduce her request he enquired her wish and promised in advance that he would grant it, even to the half of his kingdom. Esther had probably heard such promises before; it is likely that, knowing the unpredictable nature of her royal spouse, she felt that a gradual approach to the subject at issue was best calculated to achieve a satisfactory outcome. She asked therefore that the king and Haman his chief adviser would honour her with their presence at a little private banquet that she had arranged for them in her own apartments. The Xerxes of history is known for never refusing an opportunity of good food and good wine and it is quite in character to read here that he commanded Haman to make haste to accompany him to this unexpected treat.

At the banquet, the king repeated his question and renewed his promise. He was astute enough to recognise that there was more to this than the desire to have a meal together. Esther, still playing her cards close, responded with an invitation to another banquet on the morrow, and a promise to make her real request known on that occasion.

Thus it was that on the morrow the two august personages had cups in their hands again. The Hebrew expression really means something in the nature of a drinking session and it is more than possible that King Xerxes was rapidly passing into a benign condition of mind as once more he repeated his question, "*what is thy petition, Queen Esther?...It shall be*

granted thee...What is thy request?...It shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.” (7:2) Esther realised that the psychological moment was now and came straight out with a moving plea for her own life and the lives of her people, all subjects of a decree which appointed them to destruction and death. With the swift upsurge of anger for which this king is noted he demanded “*who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?*” (7:5) conveniently forgetting that he himself had approved the decree. But he had not known then that his favourite wife and Queen was a Jewess—and neither had Haman, who now realised that he had badly overplayed his hand. Esther’s next words in answer to the king greatly increased the schemer’s panic: “*the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman*” (v.6) and at that the king, in uncontrollable wrath, went out into the garden, perhaps to cool off. It is probable that the only one who remained perfectly calm and self-possessed was Esther herself, who now had the entire situation in her own hands. Haman, in blind unreasoning terror, had thrown himself on the divan upon which Esther was reclining, to plead for his life, and the king, coming back at that unfortunate moment, in blazing anger accused him of committing an assault upon the person of the Queen. Of course, he did not really believe that, but his wrathful outburst was sufficient hint to the attendants, who promptly took Haman into custody and stood awaiting orders. Haman had already erected a gallows on which he hoped to see Mordecai crucified, and the attendants, who seem to have had no love for him, knew this. One of them mentioned the fact, in a tentative fashion, to the king, who immediately whirled round and uttered the dread words “*Hang him thereon.*” (v.9) So Haman was hurried away and crucified on the gallows he had intended for Mordecai.

The instigator of the decree was dead, but the decree remained. The true relationship of Mordecai to Esther was now revealed, and the king, doubtless further to please his wife, advanced Mordecai to high honour. To Esther he gave all the household and property of the executed Haman. Now Esther set about the business of annulling the decree. This was approached by falling at the king’s feet and beseeching him with tears. She may or may not have known that under the constitution of Persia a royal decree once issued could not be revoked, even by the king. One of Xerxes’ predecessors, Darius the Mede, found himself in this same dilemma when he was tricked into having Daniel cast into the lion’s den. In that instance God delivered. This time plans for deliverance seem to have been made without calling upon God for help. The king appears to have indicated to Esther and to Mordecai that whilst he could not revoke the decree giving leave to his subjects to attack and massacre Jews to

their hearts' content on the thirteenth day of the forthcoming twelfth month, there was nothing to stop him issuing a further decree giving the Jews leave to take whatever steps they thought fit to defend themselves and slay any who displayed enmity towards them. No sooner said than done; Mordecai, armed with royal authority, and the royal seal wherewith to authorise his letters, promulgated this second decree throughout the empire, also bringing it to the notice of all "*the lieutenants, and deputies and rulers*" (8:9) of the political divisions of the empire; these worthies, perceiving the direction in which the wind was now blowing, could be relied upon to assist the king's new favourites and see that the Jews were by no means hindered, and possibly somewhat helped, in their plans to wreak revenge upon their enemies.

It would seem that Esther was now firmly in the saddle and could do almost what she liked with King Xerxes. The time came for the implementation of both decrees, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and the Jews throughout the empire acquitted themselves well in the use of carnal weapons. In the royal city Shushan five hundred were slain and in the rest of the empire seventy-five thousand according to the Masoretic text, fifteen thousand according to the Septuagint. The king, quite unperturbed at the loss of so many of his subjects, came to Esther with the news, and asked her what more she wanted. "*Now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.*" (9: 12) Esther has been criticised for requesting at this point that the Jews in Shushan be given leave to spend one more day slaying their enemies. She is described as bloodthirsty and revengeful. Unless the full facts of the case are known it may be wise to defer judgment. It may have been that in the royal city itself there were many enemies of the Jews still unaccounted for and they could be a source of trouble in the future. While the admittedly changeable king was in his present mood it were better to crush the anti-Jew party for good and all. It is probable anyway that in this the queen was advised by Mordecai and he appears as a shrewd and relentless politician who intended to secure his own nation's future by any possible means. So another three hundred were slain in the city before the fighting ceased.

After all, men like David, Joshua, Gideon, were responsible for much heavier slaughter of the enemies of Israel and have been—perhaps unwisely—lauded as the champions of God. Esther, a true daughter of her people, took advantage of the opportunity she had as Queen of Persia to defend that people from enemies who would have spoiled and massacred them without cause.

So the story of Esther closes, in about the fourteenth or fifteenth year of Xerxes' reign, when she had been queen for about seven years, with the Jews enjoying prosperity and royal favour, Mordecai the Jew an important man at Court, and Esther herself firmly established as the consort of the great King. Whether this happy state continued for the remainder of the king's reign is not known. Mordecai has been identified with Matacas, who is recorded in history as one of the most powerful men at court during Xerxes' reign, but the identification is uncertain. The suggestion sometimes made that Esther was the Amestris, wife of Xerxes in the pages of Herodotus, is certainly incorrect. Amestris was the daughter of Xerxes' uncle Otanes and married him long before he became king; their son Darius was at least twenty years old at Xerxes' accession to the throne. It is possible that the Vashti of the Book of Esther was Amestris and it is noticeable that although Darius was the eldest son he did not succeed as king; a younger son of Xerxes, Artaxerxes I became king after him. This of itself is interesting. Certain native Persian historians have said that the mother of Artaxerxes was a Jewess; it is also recorded that Artaxerxes was a somewhat mild and weak-willed man dominated by his mother and sister. He reigned for the unusually long period of forty years, indicating accession at an early age. If he was in fact the son of Esther he could not have been more than thirteen years of age when his father died—murdered—so that the queen would obviously act as Regent and adviser for a number of years. The brief glimpses we have of her character would seem to infer that she would not let go the reins of power easily. And if Esther did indeed bear a son to her husband in those early years it becomes easier to understand the somewhat excessive infatuation he seems to have had for her; she had given him a son, born during his reign, to reign as king after him. Xerxes himself succeeded to the throne only because his own elder brother was born before their father became king. It is a fascinating thought, that the simple Jewish maid who against her will had been exalted to become Queen of Persia may have been a means in the Lord's hand to assure Israel's peace and security for more than a century. From the Restoration from Babylon under Cyrus to the end of the Old Testament in the time of Malachi was about a hundred and thirty years. That time of rebuilding the nation is illumined by a gallery of famous names who rendered yeomen service in the work of restoration—Daniel, Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi. Perhaps to that company of stalwarts raised up to perform the good purposes of God we should add the name of one woman—Esther, Queen of Persia.

AOH

Proverbs 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*

STEADFASTNESS

Steadfastness implies stability, constancy, and faithfulness: and refers to the condition of holding fast, or remaining firmly established. It is our duty and delight to be steadfast in Christ Jesus. The question is how can we maintain our steadfastness?

Firstly, by *Devotion and Prayer*. The speed, excitement, and unrest of today, tends to displace contemplation upon eternal things. Luke 6:12 records that Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God, and if such a continual correspondence in thought and mind with the Heavenly Father was appropriate for Jesus, who was perfect, how much more necessary for us to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Secondly, *Knowledge*. The inspired Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path: (Psa. 119:105) it is, indeed, a means of our sanctification. “Do thou continue in the things which thou didst learn and wast convinced of, knowing thou hast been instructed.” (2 Tim. 3:14 Diaglott)

Thirdly, *Heart Reliance*. The Apostle’s words in Romans 8:38,39, declares that he was *persuaded* that nothing would be able “to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” We are to be similarly confident and steadfast. We are to be fired by a resolve that no opposition must interfere with our Christian walk, and cultivate such a desire for the Kingdom that no discouragement can quench. Anyone who appreciates fully, and believes, the exceeding great and precious promises of God to the Church, will make haste and appropriate them to himself: and with steadfastness will so run as to obtain. Surely we want to be Abraham’s Seed, and heirs according to the promise, through which Seed all families of the earth are to be blessed? Let us not be like Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright. We have been begotten of the Holy spirit, we have a birthright in the highest possible sense, and we are urged not to cast it away. We must see to it that the cravings of our fleshly mind are mortified, and that we quickly sever every cord that would bind us to earthly things.

Fourthly, *Associating ourselves with those who are similarly steadfast*. “Exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Heb. 10:25)

Let us now consider the testing of our steadfastness. “The LORD your

God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 13:3) Jesus was tested to the uttermost: all his experiences he realized were under the supervision of the Heavenly Father, and because God had permitted such experiences, Jesus was determined to prove his loyalty by patient endurance. His words were: “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11) Concerning ourselves we exclaim: “I come to do Thy Will, O God,” and our Father replies: “will you be faithful under the conditions which I impose?” “Are ye able to drink of My cup?” “Are ye able to be dead with Christ?” “Crucified with Him?” We think of St. Paul’s attitude—“I am crucified with Christ!” (Gal. 2:20) The illustrious Apostle, with all his great earthly possibilities, declared that he had been slain with Christ: the rooted affections and ambitions of the natural heart had been pierced with the nail of crucifixion.

Concerning all the Lord’s followers, Gal. 5:24, does not read, they that are Christ’s will merely think about crucifying the flesh: but “they that are Christ’s *have* crucified the flesh,” and it is through this process that we reduce the area of our humanity, in order that we may broaden and extend the horizon of our heavenly natures. “For *if* we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5) Let us ever remember the stupendous thought in 2 Thess. 2:14, that we are called “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Do we realize that we have not attained our moral and spiritual ideals? Note the Apostle’s words in Phil. 3:12: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after.” Let us remind ourselves that the one sad and painful course in the Christian life is to lower the standard of Christ: the practical abandonment of it, and the dull contenting oneself with the lower order of things. May we say with the Apostle: “I pursue, if indeed I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ.” (Diaglott) “For we are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.” (Heb. 3:14) Since we have chosen this course, brethren, let us be courageous. Long has been the warfare waged by the power of darkness against Jehovah and His anointed—now the closing phase of the conflict has set in: let us not shrink from it. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph. 6:11) Without this whole armour it is possible to turn away our ears from the truth unto fables. The possibility to thus fall away from the truth is not accidental, see 1 Cor 11:19 (Diaglott): “For it is necessary that there should be

factions (heresies) among you, so that the approved may be apparent among you.” Those who are approved by God will endure the tests and stand firm in the faith and the love of God. “Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.” (2 Pet. 3:17)

*Soldiers of Christ arise
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son.*

*Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power;
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.*

HIS WILL, NOT MINE, BE DONE

O THOU of little faith! why dost thou fear?
Didst thou forget that Jesus is so near?
And hast thou thought that thou must walk alone?
Behold now at thy side the loved One!

Aye, more than this, thou’rt held within His hand,
And ’twas Himself that hath thy trial planned!
There was a need be seen by Eye Divine,
Although, perchance, not visible to thine.

And, wherefore wouldst thou see? Thou canst not tell
If what thy heart contends for would be well;
Perhaps thy hope’s fruition would be vain,
Or prove a life-long discipline of pain!

Hast thou not seen, in retrospective life,
That will of God which caused thee bitterest strife
Hath turned to sweetness—while the thing He gave
To suit thy will grew darker than the grave?

There’s rest supreme for souls that choose His will;
A blest security from every ill.
The things God chooses for us never fail!
They have their anchorage within the veil.

*Mrs H W Brown
Poems of Dawn*



THE PLAN OF GOD—IN BRIEF

STUDY 5—The Permission of Evil

Evil is that which produces unhappiness; anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind.—Webster. This subject, therefore, not only inquires regarding human ailments, sorrows, pains, weaknesses and death, but goes back of all these to consider their primary cause—sin—and its remedy. Since sin is the cause of evil, its removal is the only method of permanently curing the malady.

No difficulty, perhaps, more frequently presents itself to the inquiring mind than the questions, Why did God permit the present reign of evil? Why did He permit Satan to present the temptation to our first parents, after having created them perfect and upright? Or why did He allow the forbidden tree to have a place among the good? Despite all attempts to turn it aside, the question will obtrude itself—Could not God have prevented all possibility of man's fall?

The difficulty undoubtedly arises from a failure to comprehend the plan of God. God could have prevented the entrance of sin, but the fact He did not should be sufficient proof to us that its present permission is designed ultimately to work out some greater good. God's plans, seen in their completeness, will prove the wisdom of the course pursued. Some inquire, Could not God, with whom all things are possible, have interfered in season to prevent the full accomplishment of Satan's design? Doubtless He could; but such interference would have prevented the accomplishment of His own purposes. His purpose was to make manifest the perfection, majesty and righteous authority of His law, and to prove both to men and to angels the evil consequences resulting from its violation. Besides, in their very nature, some things are impossible even with God, as the Scriptures state. It is "impossible for God to lie." (Heb. 6:18) "He cannot deny Himself." (2 Tim. 2:13) He cannot do wrong, and therefore He could not choose any but the wisest and best plan for introducing His creatures into life, even though our short-sighted vision might for a time fail to discern the hidden springs of infinite wisdom.

The Scriptures declare that all things were created for the Lord's pleasure (Rev. 4:11)—without doubt, for the pleasure of dispensing His blessings, and of exercising the attributes of His glorious being. And though, in the working out of his benevolent designs, He permits evil and evil doers for a time to play an active part, yet it is not for evil's sake, nor because He is in league with sin; for He declares that He is "not a God that hath pleasure

in wickedness.” (Psa. 5:4) Though opposed to evil in every sense, God *permits* (i.e., does not hinder) it for a time, because His wisdom sees a way in which it may be made a lasting and valuable lesson to His creatures.

It is a self-evident truth that for every right principle there is a corresponding wrong principle; as, for instance, truth and falsity, love and hatred, justice and injustice. We distinguish these opposite principles as *right* and *wrong*, by their effects when put in action. That principle the result of which, when active, is beneficial and productive of ultimate order, harmony and happiness we call a *right* principle; and the opposite, which is productive of discord, unhappiness and destruction, we call a *wrong* principle. The results of these principles in action we call *good* and *evil*; the intelligent being, capable of discerning the right principle from the wrong, and voluntarily governed by the one or the other, we call virtuous or sinful.

This faculty of discerning between right and wrong principles is called the *moral sense*, or *conscience*. It is by this moral sense which God has given to man that we are able to judge of God and to recognize that He is good. It is to this moral sense that God always appeals to prove His righteousness or justice; by the same moral sense Adam could discern sin, or unrighteousness, to be evil, even before he knew all its consequences. The lower orders of God’s creatures are not endowed with this moral sense. A dog has some intelligence, but not to this degree, though he may learn that certain actions bring the approval and reward of his master, and certain others his disapproval. He might steal or take life but would not be termed a sinner; or he might protect property and life but would not be called virtuous—because he is ignorant of the moral quality of his actions.

God could have made mankind devoid of the ability to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern and to do right; but to have made him so would have been to make merely a living machine, and certainly not a mental image of His Creator. Or He might have made man perfect and a free agent, as He did, and have guarded him from Satan’s temptation. In that case, man’s experience being limited to good, he would have been continually liable to suggestions of evil from without, or to ambitions from within, which would have made the everlasting future uncertain, and an outbreak of disobedience and disorder might always have been a possibility besides which, good would never have been so highly appreciated except by its contrast with evil.

God first made His creatures acquainted with good, surrounding them with it in Eden; afterward, as a penalty for disobedience, He gave them a severe knowledge of evil. Expelled from Eden and deprived of fellowship with Himself, God let them experience sickness, pain and death, that they might forever know evil and the inexpediency and exceeding sinfulness of sin.

By a comparison of results they came to an appreciation and proper estimate of both; "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Gen. 3:22) In this their posterity share, except that they first obtain their knowledge of evil, and cannot fully realize what good is until they experience it in the Millennium, as a result of their redemption by Him who will then be their Judge and King.

The moral sense, or judgment of right and wrong, and the liberty to use it, which Adam possessed, were important features of his likeness to God. The law of right and wrong was written in his natural constitution. It was part of his nature, just as it is a part of the divine nature. But let us not forget that this image or likeness of God, this originally law-inscribed nature of man, has lost much of its clear outline through the erasing, degrading influence of sin; hence it is not now what it was in the first man. Ability to love implies ability to hate; hence we may reason that the Creator could not make man in His own likeness, with power to love and to do right, without the corresponding ability to hate and to do wrong. This liberty of choice, termed free moral agency, or free will, is a part of man's original endowment; and this, together with the full measure of his mental and moral faculties, constituted him an image of his Creator. Today, after six thousand years of degradation, so much of the original likeness has been erased by sin that we are not free; being bound, to a greater or less extent, by sin and its entailments, so that sin is now more easy and therefore more agreeable to the fallen race than is righteousness.

That God could have given Adam such a vivid impression of the many evil results of sin as would have deterred him from it, we need not question, but we believe that God foresaw that an actual experience of the evil would be the surest and most lasting lesson to serve man eternally; and for that reason God did not prevent but permitted man to take his choice, and to feel the consequences of evil. Had opportunity to sin never been permitted man could not have resisted it, consequently there would have been neither virtue nor merit in his right-doing. God seeks such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth. He desires intelligent and willing obedience rather than ignorant mechanical service. He already had

in operation inanimate mechanical agencies accomplishing His will, but His design was to make a nobler thing, an intelligent creature in His own likeness, a lord for earth, whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good and evil.

The principles of right and wrong, as *principles*, have always existed, and must always exist; and all perfect, intelligent creatures in God's likeness must be free to choose either, though the right principle *only* will forever continue to be active. The Scriptures inform us that when the activity of the evil principle has been permitted long enough to accomplish God's purpose, it will forever cease to be active, and that all who continue to submit to its control shall forever cease to exist. (1 Cor. 15:25,26; Heb. 2:14) Right-doing and right-doers only, shall continue forever.

God not only foresaw that having given man freedom of choice he would, through lack of *full* appreciation of sin and its results, accept it, but He also saw that becoming acquainted with it he would still choose it, because that acquaintance would so impair his moral nature that evil would gradually become more agreeable and more desirable to him than good. Still, God designed to *permit evil*, because, having the remedy provided for man's release from its consequences, He saw that the result would be to lead him, through experience, to a full appreciation of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" and of the matchless brilliancy of virtue in contrast with it—thus teaching him the more to love and honour his Creator, who is the source and fountain of all goodness, and forever to shun that which brought so much woe and misery. So the final result will be greater love for God, and greater hatred of all that is opposed to His will, and consequently the firm establishment in everlasting righteousness of all such as shall profit by the lessons God is now teaching through the permission of sin and correlative evils. However, a wide distinction should be observed between the indisputable fact that God has permitted sin, and the serious error of some which charges God with being the author and instigator of sin. The latter view is both blasphemous and contradictory to the facts presented in the Scriptures. Those who fall into this error generally do so in an attempt to find another plan of salvation than that which God has provided through the *sacrifice* of Christ as our ransom-price. If they succeed in convincing themselves and others that God is responsible for all sin and wickedness and crime, and that man as an innocent tool in His hands was forced into sin, then they have cleared the way for the theory that not a sacrifice for our sins, nor mercy in any form, was needed, but simply and only *justice*. So, too, they lay a foundation for another part of this false theory, viz., universalism,

claiming that as God caused all the sin and wickedness and crime in all, He will also cause the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death. And reasoning that God willed and caused the sin, and that none could resist Him, so they claim that when He shall will righteousness all will likewise be powerless to resist Him. But in all such reasoning, man's noblest quality, liberty of will or *choice*, the most striking feature of his likeness to his Creator, is entirely set aside; and man is theoretically degraded to a mere machine which acts only as it is acted upon. If this were the case, man, instead of being the lord of earth, would be inferior even to insects; for they undoubtedly have a will or power of choice. Even the little ant has been given a power of will which man, though by his greater power he may oppose and thwart, cannot destroy.

The erroneous idea that God placed our race on trial for life with the alternative of eternal torture, is not even hinted at in the penalty, no nothing like this. The favour or blessing of God to His obedient children is life—continuous life—free from pain, sickness and every other element of decay and death. Adam was given this blessing in the full measure, but was warned that he would be deprived of this “gift” if he failed to render obedience to God—“In the day that you eat thereof, dying, you shall die.” (Gen. 2:17 margin) He knew nothing of a *life* in torment, as the penalty of sin. Life everlasting is nowhere promised to any but the obedient. Life is God's gift, and death, the opposite of life, is the penalty He prescribes.

God assures us that as condemnation *passed upon* all *in* Adam, so He has arranged for a new head, father or life-giver for the race, into whom all may be transferred by faith; and that as all *in* Adam shared the curse of death, so all *in* Christ will share the blessing of life, being justified by faith in His blood. (Rom. 5:12,18,19) So seen, the death of Jesus, the undefiled, the sinless one, was a complete settlement toward God of the sin of Adam. As one man had sinned, and all in him had shared his curse, his penalty, so Jesus, having paid the penalty of that one sinner, bought not only Adam but all of his posterity—all men—who by heredity shared his weaknesses and sins and the penalty of these—death. Our Lord, “the *man* Christ Jesus,” Himself unblemished, approved, and with a perfect seed or race in him, unborn, likewise untainted with sin, gave His *all* of human life and title as the full *ransom-price* for Adam and the race or seed in him when sentenced.

And so it is written: “As all in Adam die, *even* so all in Christ shall be made alive.” Corrected translation, 1 Cor. 15:22.

Those who can appreciate this feature of God's plan, which, by condemning all in *one* representative opened the way for the ransom and restoration of all by *one* Redeemer, will find in it the solution of many perplexities. They will see that the condemnation of all in one was the reverse of an injury: it was a great favour to *all* when taken in connection with God's plan for providing justification for *all* through another one's sacrifice. Evil will be forever extinguished when God's purpose in permitting it shall have been accomplished, and when the benefits of the ransom are made co-extensive with the penalty of sin. It is impossible, however, to appreciate rightly this feature of the plan of God without a full recognition of the sinfulness of sin, the nature of its penalty—death, the importance and value of the *ransom* which our Lord Jesus gave, and the positive and complete restoration of the individual to favourable conditions, conditions under which he will have full and ample trial, before being adjudged worthy of the reward (lasting life), or of the penalty (lasting death).

In view of the great plan of redemption, and the consequent "restoration of all things," through Christ, we can see that blessings result through the permission of evil which, probably, could not otherwise have been so fully realized.

It seems clear that substantially the same law of God which is now over mankind, obedience to which has the reward of life, and disobedience the reward of death, must ultimately govern all of God's intelligent creatures; and that law, as our Lord defined it, is briefly comprehended in the one word, *Love*. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." (Luke 10:27 NKJV) Ultimately, when the purposes of God shall have been accomplished, the glory of the divine character will be manifest to all intelligent creatures, and the temporary permission of evil will be seen by all to have been a wise feature in the divine policy. Now, this can be seen only by the eye of faith looking onward through God's Word at the things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began—the restoration of all things.



When darkness seems to veil His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

*On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*

BSH 247

TEN VISIONS OF CHRIST TRIUMPHANT

6. Vision 10. The Thousand Years

The culmination of the whole Bible story, its history, prophecy and theology, is reached in the 20th chapter of Revelation where John sees the triumphant Lord, having vanquished all enemies, seizing and rendering impotent the arch-enemy of God and man, the Devil, and then ascending the throne of the earth, in company with his Church, and reigning over the nations for the predicted thousand years, the Millennium. The result of this reign is the conversion of all who can be persuaded of those who formerly had been alien from God, the passing out of life of any who reject the opportunity, and the entry of mankind into the eternal state in a condition of complete unity with God and Christ. Unrighteousness and death will no longer exist; the whole creation in which man is concerned will have attained the position towards which God has been working from the start, and his human creatures will inherit everlasting life in complete peace and contentment.

Here in the vision John first saw a mighty angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand (Rev. 20:1), proceeding to lay hold on "*the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan*" and bind him for the thousand years. Having thus bound him, he "*cast him into the bottomless pit (abyss), and shut him up...that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.*" This, obviously, is an essential preliminary to the resurrection of the dead and their induction, with the then living, into the new order of things in which the outward practice of evil is completely restrained, which is characteristic of the Millennial reign of Christ. Nothing shall hurt nor destroy, says Isaiah, speaking of that blessed time (Isa. 11:9) and again "*the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*" (Isa. 32:17) Such condition of society can only obtain when the powers of evil have themselves been eliminated or restrained by a superior power for good. The 19th chapter of Revelation pictures the annihilation of all man-made systems of evil at the end of this Age; there remains only the Devil himself to be dealt with and then the evangelical work of the next Age, the Millennium, will be able to proceed without let or hindrance.

That there is such a malevolent spiritual intelligence actively moving in the affairs of men is plainly inferred in the Scriptures and that this intelligence, the spirit of evil, irrevocably antagonistic to God and to every element of right-doing, is to be annihilated at the end, is indicated.

The story of man's creation and the Garden of Eden, with which Bible history opens, is founded upon the principle that man was created perfect, upright, sinless and undying, that an evil and hostile intelligence from beyond man's world persuaded our first progenitors into sin, and that death came upon men as a logical consequence. The reason why God has permitted the coexistence of sin and evil with right-doing and good throughout human history until the present is one for thought and discussion but the Bible is clear that this permission is for a wise purpose and will not endure forever. A time is to come in the progress of the Divine Plan, and before that Plan has come to its consummation so far as man is concerned, when the Prince of all evil, and all his works, will perish together.

This final judgment is not pictured here in these first three verses of Rev. 20. The chapter goes on to cover the whole duration of the Millennium and it is only at its close that the restraints on the Prince of evil are relaxed. He is shown then to be still unrepentant and rebellious, and so comes to his final end. When it is remembered that the thousand-year Millennial Age is appointed by God as the final period and opportunity for conversion and acceptance of the way of life for all mankind—and incidentally for the rebellious angels of Gen. 6 also—(see Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 6:2-3) it would seem logical that even the one who was responsible for the introduction of evil into the world and has fostered it ever since should have the same opportunity. It is always and gloriously true that our God is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Pet. 3:9) It was to Ezekiel that the Lord uttered the immortal words *“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”* (Ezek. 18:23) But there is a definite inference in the Old Testament that the Most High, in the exercise of his supreme foreknowledge, does know that this particular creation of his own hands will at the end prove impervious to his persuasion and his goodness and will go deliberately into the darkness rather than acknowledge and practice that which is good and right. The two well-known passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel which are taken to be allusions to his career and destiny (Isa. 14:4-20; Ezek. 28:12-19) *“thou shalt be brought down to hell (Sheol), to the sides of the pit”* *“I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth...and never shalt thou be any more”* ****(18-19) have a terrible finality about them which can hardly bear any other interpretation.

So at the beginning of the Millennium the Devil is cast into the abyss. In Jewish lore the abyss was a place, or condition, below and remote from

Hades, the abode of the dead, in which contact or communication with the world of the living was impossible. Peter describes the rebellious angels of Gen. 6 as being confined, after their sin, in Tartarus (“God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell”—*tartarus*, the only occurrence of this word in the N.T.—2 Pet. 2:4). Tartarus in Greek mythology was a place as far below Hades as Hades was below Earth, the eternal prison of the Titans, the demi-gods who rebelled against the chief gods—clearly derived from the original Biblical episode of the rebellious angels,—and so the Greek Tartarus is analogous (similar) to the Hebrew abyss. (An allusion to this is found in Luke 8:31 where the demons expelled from the demented man besought Jesus “that he would not command them to go out into the *deep*,” where “*deep*” is, in the Greek, *abyss*.) For the entire period of the thousand years, then, the Devil is impotent, unable to influence the world of men in any way, and perhaps able only to observe the beneficent results of the Messianic administration and the life-giving results which stem from the reign of Christ.

This “binding of Satan” represents a vital turning-point in the work of the Second Advent. Several of the preceding visions of Christ triumphant in the Book of Revelation picture different aspects of what may be termed the preliminary events of the “days of the Son of Man” and all of these have their place during the closing days of this present Age. The King coming upon a white cloud to reap the harvest of the earth pictures our Lord’s Advent for the gathering of his Church; the angel proclaiming the fall of great Babylon his oversight of the forces which disrupt the present corrupt world order and bring it to ruin; the Rider on the White Horse leading the armies of Heaven into battle against the kings of the earth the final conflict which elsewhere is called Armageddon. But after Armageddon the kingship of this earth passes into the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ and thereafter the world enters an era of peace. It seems logical to expect that this “binding of Satan” is the next event on the programme and perhaps almost immediately following the victorious conflict of Rev. 19. Next in order would come the resurrection of the dead and this is where the succeeding verses of Rev. 20 have their place.

“I saw thrones,” says John (20:4) *“and they that sat upon them...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

The “marriage of the Lamb” will have already taken place—that event, which takes place in the celestial sphere is not perceptible on earth, is alluded to in chap. 19. Following that climax to the earthly course of the Church comes the descent from Heaven with the Lord himself and the

conflict of Rev. 19, which leaves Heaven in full control of Earth and Christ the undisputed ruler. It is significant though that nothing is said in that chapter about the Church reigning with Christ; this appears for the first time in chap. 20. It is almost as if the *de facto* reign of Christ, with his Church, does not commence until the last enemy, the Devil, is rendered powerless. From that point, it may be said, the real work of the Millennium proceeds. And all Scripture doctrine as well as prophecy concurs in saying that the Church of Christ, the complete company of his faithful disciples and followers throughout this present Age, are to be actively associated with him in the work of that Age.

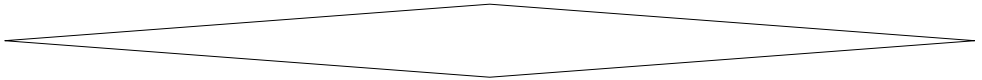
What that work involves is more clearly detailed in chaps. 21 and 22. The remainder of chap. 20 is taken up with a brief summary of the Millennium, leading up to the final judgment at its end. Then John goes back and at greater leisure sketches in the detail of that world which is to be. There is a new world, for the old world has passed away, and God now is going to dwell with men in the persons of his Son Jesus Christ and the members of his Church. There will be no more death, no tears, sorrow nor crying; no more pain. All the former things have passed away and the universal Father in Heaven will make all things new.

In the ecstasy of that revelation John lifted up his eyes to heaven and beheld the resplendent vision of the New Jerusalem descending to earth. Much of the inspiration for that vision must have come from Ezekiel. He too saw the city of God with its central Temple, established in the earth at the time of man's deliverance from evil. Prophet and Apostle alike experienced the same preview, in symbol, of the then far future Millennial world. A glorious city, to be the home of redeemed mankind, surrounding a magnificent Throne from which would flow the life-giving waters of eternal life, a Throne on which were seated the Lord God Almighty, Father and Creator of all men, the Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour and King, and the Church his Bride, all ready for the final phase in the process of human salvation. And John saw what Ezekiel had seen so many centuries before him, a stream, a river, of water of life, issuing forth from the Throne and reaching out into all the world, with trees on its banks, trees of life, whose fruit should be for food and leaves for healing, for the food and healing of the nations, of all mankind.

So this final aspect of the Second Advent, enduring the full thousand years of the Millennium, will abolish sin and death and all unhappiness, introducing in their stead right and life and eternal felicity. *“The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting*

joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:10) The purpose for which Christ came to earth, suffered and died, will have been fully and gloriously accomplished, and Christ will be triumphant over all. The closing words of the final vision in the last book of God’s revelation to man come from our victorious Lord and his exalted Church, his Bride. *“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Rev. 22:17)

THE END
AOH



PEACE, BE STILL!

THE centuries have rolled away;
I stand beside the sea to-day.
The winds of strife blow wild and strong,
Whilst waves of trouble roll along,
And through the blackness of the night
The storm increases in its might.
Our wisest men in vain have tried
To stem the rising of this tide.
But One I see who seems to sleep
Unconscious of the raging deep.
Ah, no! he waits to hear the cry
“Unless Thou savest we must die!”
By faith again I see Him stand,
And listen to his blest command.
Enraptured now, I know the thrill
For lo! I hear His “Peace be still!”
Through faith I see a newborn world,
I see His flag of peace unfurled
And men in bondage own His sway
Whom stormy winds and waves obey.—*Psalm 46*

*Irene Armstrong
The Call of the Bride*

WILL YOUR ANCHOR HOLD IN THE STORMS OF LIFE—A HYMN

WILL your anchor hold in the storms of life?
 When the clouds unfold their wings of strife;
 When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
 Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Chorus-

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
 Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
 Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
 Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*



Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear?
 When the breakers roll and the reef is near;
 While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
 Shall the angry waves then your barque o'erflow?

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
 When the waters cold chill your latest breath?
 On the rising tide you can never fail,
 While your anchor holds within the veil.



Will your eyes behold thro' the morning light
 The city of gold, and the harbour bright?
 Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
 When life's storms are past for evermore?

These are the words in 1882 of Priscilla Owens (1829-1907) who was of Scottish and Welsh extraction, born in Baltimore. She mainly wrote for children's services.

Here are some verses which may have inspired the author:
 Mark 13:24-25 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

Hebrews 12:27-28 Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

1 Corinthians 10:4 Did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Psalms 69:2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

Jonah 1:4 The LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Isaiah 43:1-2 Thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

Mark 4:36-41 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Revelation 21:15-19 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal...and the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.

The tune, *Anchor*, that captures the words in such a stirring fashion was written by William J. Kirkpatrick of Philadelphia, U.S.A.

THE BIBLE'S SONG OF LOVE

Verse by verse through the Song of Songs Part 3a CHAPTERS 3:6-5:1

All references RV unless otherwise specified

As we look back over the first two parts we can observe that the maiden is growing nearer to her Lord. The second part draws to a close on a note of almost distraught anxiety on the maiden's part lest she should lose her Beloved again. Her love is earnest but still not mature and Part 3 introduces us to the maiden as one who has reached some "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13)

3:6 It opens with the exclamations of admiration: "WHO IS THIS THAT COMETH UP OUT OF THE WILDERNESS LIKE PILLARS OF SMOKE, PERFUMED WITH MYRRH AND FRANKINCENSE, WITH ALL POWDERS OF THE MERCHANT?" This seems to follow appropriately after the events portrayed in the previous part. It is during the time of our Lord's second presence that the *true* Church emerges from the wilderness condition pictured in Rev. 12:6.

The use of the feminine gender in the original confirms for us that the words are spoken of the maiden, but who are the speakers? May it not be that they are the angelic hosts? They gave voice to their wonder and joy at the first advent of our Lord and the Apostle Peter says that they "*desire to look into*" the outworking of God's Plan. (1 Pet. 1:12) The Apostle Paul also tells us that "*we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels...*" (1 Cor. 4:9)

The root meaning of "pillars of smoke" is "to be erect." (Similarly the word used for "burnt offering" in the Old Testament means "that which goes up.") The direction of rising pillars of smoke is towards heaven. Such a column can be seen from a distance like "a city set on a hill." The pillar of smoke is associated with fragrance as indicated in the reference to the "myrrh and frankincense and the powders of the merchant." The finest incense powders were those which merchants brought from the East. In the Tabernacle type we remember that the incense was crushed finely to bring out its full fragrance and in order that it should burn evenly. Its smoke ascended heavenwards, that is into the Most Holy.

The thoughts which arise from this meditation have been crystallised in these words "She is invested with a fragrance that has been brought out under the action of fire...here the spouse is viewed as coming up from the wilderness, and bringing nothing with her but the sweet fragrance of Christ... The spouse comes up out of the wilderness twice in this book.

She comes up here in all the fragrance that arises from the altar. But in the eighth chapter she comes up leaning on her Beloved.” (CAC*)

Verses 7-11 refer to the Bridegroom and suggest that the Bride is not yet manifested. Thus the picture of our Lord’s second presence continues. It is the thought conveyed in our Lord’s parable of the ten virgins: “Behold, the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him.” (Matt. 25:6) In Jewish wedding celebrations the Bridegroom brings the Bride to the wedding. Similarly in this picture the heavenly onlookers, having seen the pillar of smoke, which marks the Bride’s ascent out of the wilderness, observe, in the next verse, that the Bridegroom goes forth to bring her to Him.

3:7 “BEHOLD, IT IS THE LITTER OF SOLOMON.” It no doubt had the usual curtains which adds to the appropriateness of this symbol, for God Himself speaks of having “walked” with Israel “in a tent and in a tabernacle.” (2 Sam. 7:6) This “bed” of Solomon is an illustration of Christ’s presence amongst His own. They came up out of the wilderness condition of the Gospel Age. It is a bed of active service and is in striking contrast to the maiden’s “bed” of idle ease in verse 1. This symbolises the temporary resting place of the great antitypical Solomon.

The litter is guarded and supported for “THREESCORE MIGHTY MEN ARE ABOUT IT, OF THE MIGHTY MEN OF ISRAEL.”

“It is to be noted that He does not provide a chariot, which would run upon wheels, but a “palanquin,” which is carried by its bearers. The Lord’s movements, as thus typified, are not independent of His saints; He moves as carried by their affectionate fidelity...He moves amongst His people, but not independently of their affections and service.” (CAC) This dependence, as it were, of the Lord upon His loved ones and at the same time His close association with them can be seen in His last words in Matt. 28:19,20 (mar.): “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age.”

The example of David’s thirty mighty men (2 Sam. 23) helps us to see more of the significance of the threescore mighty men of this passage. At a time when David was in a “wilderness” condition he, the anointed of God, was attended and served day and night by his mighty men “who shewed themselves strong with him in his kingdom.”

3:8 Like them, the mighty men of the song “THEY ALL HANDLE THE SWORD, AND ARE EXPERT IN WAR: EVERY MAN HATH HIS SWORD UPON HIS THIGH, BECAUSE OF FEAR IN THE NIGHT.” Those who would be mighty men in the service of the Lord must “take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12 KJV)

Moreover the Lord’s “mighty men” must be on guard in what is now a wilderness condition, and not involved in the disputes of the city for “No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who enrolled as a soldier.” (2 Tim. 2:4) We need to be “expert in war” “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Cor. 2:11 KJV) The need for this was always true, but now when our Lord comes for His own and to take up His rulership, He sets His followers a special example for this is the time foretold by the Psalmist “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride on prosperously.” (Psa. 45:3,4) So let us also say “Blessed be the LORD, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight...” “It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect...” (Psa. 144:1; 18:32 KJV)

“His resting place here is guarded by faithful affections...We often think of Him as protecting us, and where should we be without His protection? But here is another side...fidelity to Him in the face of all that is adverse, can only be maintained in a militant spirit...Think of the Lord entrusting Himself to the guardianship of His faithful lovers.” (CAC)

3:9 As the onlookers approach the regal cavalcade the details of the Royal palanquin can be seen and so we read that “KING SOLOMON MADE HIMSELF A PALANQUIN OF THE WOOD OF LEBANON.” The wood for the Temple was cut from the evergreen cedars and firs of Mount Lebanon. The wood of these trees is referred to in the prophecy of Israel’s restoration (Isa. 60:13) in terms which suggest that they typify immortality and everlasting life, for we read that they shall “beautify the place of my sanctuary” which will, of course, be eternal.

3:10 “HE MADE THE PILLARS” or supports “THEREOF OF SILVER, THE BOTTOM” i.e. couch covering “THEREOF GOLD, THE SEAT OF IT OF PURPLE, THE MIDST THEREOF BEING PAVED (inlaid)

WITH LOVE, FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.” Thus we have a picture of Christ under a covering representing (by gold) the Divine promises (2 Pet. 1:4), this being supported by pillars of truth “for the words of the LORD are...as silver.” (Psa. 12:6) All this covers the seat of royalty represented by purple—a royalty the Bride is to share. (Rev. 5:9,10)

The interiors of regal litters of this kind were generally painted with borders of flowers intermingled with short sentences telling of the power of love, so the inlay of love from the daughters of Jerusalem seems to picture the fact that throughout the Gospel age the whole body of Christians have at least kept Christ’s love prominently written up even if many have not chosen to go out personally to be with Him. To declare His love is good but intimate communion with Him in His love is conditional on following in His footsteps. “If ye keep my commandments” Jesus said “ye shall *abide* in my love.” (John 15:10) We should also observe that, whilst “He” made the other parts of the palanquin, the expressions of love are accepted by Him from the daughters of Jerusalem. These *professions* of love, although sincere, are not as valuable as the *labours* of love of those who have put their shoulders to the task of the bearers. Moreover these are privileged to be always close to Him.

3:11 So the daughters are urged to “GO FORTH, O YE DAUGHTERS OF ZION,” (of Jerusalem) “AND BEHOLD KING SOLOMON, WITH THE CROWN WHEREWITH HIS MOTHER HATH CROWNED HIM IN THE DAY OF HIS ESPOUSALS, AND IN THE DAY OF THE GLADNESS OF HIS HEART.”

The crown here is not a symbol of royalty, but of happiness like the festive marriage garlands of olden times. Christ was, of course, the “seed” of the Sarah covenant. This was His “Mother” and the “mother of His bride.” (3:4) Jesus spoke of the gladness of His heart in relation to His loved ones in the words “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled.” (John 15:11)

“This is a view of Christ which is very distinctive and precious...It may be noticed that we do not get any detailed description of her beauty in His eyes until after this, nor is she actually called the spouse until the next chapter. But the espousals having been celebrated He is now free to speak and act towards her according to the engagement into which He has entered. It is an immense privilege to contemplate Him as crowned in this peculiar and affectionate way. It is a very precious view of Christ.” (CAC)

4:1 Once again the Bridegroom responds to the maiden's expression of love and, without a word of rebuke, He tells her "BEHOLD, THOU ART FAIR, MY LOVE; BEHOLD, THOU ART FAIR; THINE EYES ARE AS DOVES BEHIND THY VEIL." "He loves to make her conscious that she has beauty in His eyes. As under grace and its teaching certain features are developed in the saints which are most attractive to Christ. The grace of God brings beautiful features into evidence... This scripture is intended to direct our attention to features which are attractive to Christ." (CAC)

In Chapter 1 she had felt conscious of her swarthy features (verses 5,6). In this chapter we have a picture of developing beauty seen through His eyes—a beauty of which He gave her a hint in Chapter 1. In that Chapter we saw the significance of His references to the dove and that dove's eyes suggest clear spiritual perception. Here we observe that this is "a feature which is hidden from the world...she veils it from their view." (CAC)

"Blessed are your eyes" our Lord says to His followers "for they see..." (Matt. 13:16) "Do we always consider that our spiritual vision is for the pleasure of Christ? Our spiritual apprehensions are not for display before men, to attract attention to ourselves; they are 'behind the veil.' It would be good if we regarded every accession of light, every enlarged view of Christ, every increase in the knowledge of God, as conferred that we might be more pleasurable to Christ." (CAC)

This is the first of *seven* features (suggesting perfection and completeness) of her beauty in His eyes. As we read of them in the first five verses of this chapter let us remind ourselves that our external form was created by God perfect in all its parts and proportions. When "God created man in His own image" it cannot be doubted that the human form was designed in harmony with those inward spiritual and moral perfections which were a reflection of the Divine image. And so the Bridegroom's commendations are linked with the various features of the maiden's form.

Her beautiful hair next comes into view: "THY HAIR," he says, "IS AS A FLOCK OF GOATS, THAT LIE ALONG THE SIDE OF MOUNT GILEAD." The hair of the goats of Gilead was luxuriant and had a beautiful sheen. If we read this in conjunction with the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11:1-5 it appears to symbolise the richness and beauty with which each saint recognises complete subjection to the head. The reference to goats carries our thoughts directly to the Tabernacle where

the first covering was made of goats' hair. Moreover in the Atonement Day sacrifices we see that "in this type of the two goats, both classes of those who covenant and become dead with Christ are represented...he who keeps his covenant and performs the sacrifice is typically represented in the Lord's goat." (Tabernacle Shadows pages 60 & 61).

Mount Gilead was renowned for its rich pasture and was within view of Jerusalem. Thus from the heavenly viewpoint we have here a picture "of the saints viewed collectively."

4:2 "THY TEETH ARE LIKE A FLOCK OF EWES THAT ARE NEWLY SHORN, WHICH ARE COME UP FROM THE WASHING; WHICH ARE ALL OF THEM IN PAIRS, AND NONE IS BE-REAVED" (missing) "AMONG THEM." (mar.)

Her teeth are thus compared to the whiteness of newly-washed wool. In the first chapter of his prophecy Isaiah (v.18) tells of the Lord's assurance that "although your sins be...red like crimson, they shall be as wool" for, as the Apostle Paul has reminded us, it was "not by works of righteousness...but according to His mercy He saved us, by the *washing* of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5 KJV) or again in 1 Cor. 6:11 "ye were washed, ...ye were sanctified, ...ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

Her teeth represent her ability to take in spiritual food and their perfection emphasises that she was able to masticate solid food. This tells of her growing maturity "For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men." (Heb. 5:13,14)

4:3 "THY LIPS ARE LIKE A THREAD OF SCARLET, AND THY MOUTH IS COMELY." We first read of a thread of scarlet in Joshua 2:18 where it was the symbol of Rahab's salvation. The one all-absorbing theme with the lambs of Christ's flock is redeeming love: their words being all, as it were, dyed in the blood of the Lamb of God—their lips like a thread of scarlet. Thus in our testimonies and our prayers do we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? (Gal. 6:14) "For I will give you," Jesus said "a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." (Luke 21:15 KJV) Whatever other graces we might possess, a harsh voice or foolish talk would mar the beauty of the sweetest lips. So it is with our spiritual lips for "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man

out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” (Luke 6:45)

Those who love the Lord have a spiritual radiance—but seen only by Him and by those who share with them a close communion with Him. The Bridegroom draws this half-hidden feature to our attention and tells of His nearness to the maiden in the words “**THY TEMPLES**” (cheeks) “**ARE LIKE A PIECE OF POMEGRANATE BEHIND THY VEIL.**” “The most distinct evidences of vigorous spiritual life—the ruddy glow of the pomegranate on the cheeks—are ‘behind the veil’... The effect of grace would be to develop features that are a secret between our souls and the Lord...there is a good deal of correspondence between the features of the spouse as seen in the Song of Songs and the moral beauties of saints as described in the sermon on the mount.” (CAC)

In the first verse the Bridegroom speaks of her beauty but now He commends her for the spiritual radiance revealed in her features. Our love for the Lord can be beautiful but still a little pale and lifeless. If we have any doubt that this is so let us develop those spiritual exercises which make us glow like the maiden with a living, vital, love. If we “**RUN with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus...**” (Heb. 12:1-2) we shall bear the evidence of a vigorous spiritual life and reflect His beauty.

*EEA/ LB
To be continued*

NOTICES

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OUR COMFORT IN SORROW

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful. It tells of the Comforter; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness: it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vista of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears shall be put away for ever.

Thank you to the anonymous donor.

THE LORD'S SIDE

“*Who is on the LORD's side?*” (Exod. 32:26)

Who is on the Lord's side?

Who will serve the King?

Who will be His helpers,

other lives to bring?

Who will leave the world's side?

Who will face the foe?

Who is on the Lord's side?

Who for Him will go?

By Thy call of mercy,

by Thy grace Divine,

We are on the Lord's side;

Saviour, we are Thine.

There are 2 sides to every issue in life. Which side we take reveals character. We can either build up or destroy. We can be peacemakers or creators of strife; honest or crooked, merciful or tyrannical. Though many can effect a compromise there are only two sides, right and wrong, good and evil. Our days may run smoothly for a period but sooner or later we will be faced with the challenge, “Which side are you on?”. The question will have to be answered and on the answer a great deal depends. Knowledge has increased in all fields and a fight goes on in the mind of man.

Critics of the Bible and of Christianity are wearing down the faith of many. The seeds of doubt have been sown. Love of pleasure replaces love of God. The soul of man is satisfied with good living and feels no need of God. He needs neither guidance, assistance, consolation or heart-ease. The desire to worship eases, standards fall and man drifts away on a careless tide, heedless of danger, his attention distracted by the crazes of the day. Religion for the most part is formal and confused but still the challenge is ringing clearly and will be answered.

Who, in the midst of a faithless age, when belief in God is considered old fashioned, will take his side and serve him in spirit and in truth? Who in these days of doubt will say, “I believe with all my heart in the living God and in Christ as my Saviour?” Who in this age of moral dissipation and profanity will hold aloft the standard of justice and purity? Who in an age of general enlightenment will combat the foes of willing ignorance who daily disparage the Word of God and all it stands for?

It is not easy to back a losing cause, to stand steadfastly in your place while thousands fall to doubt and disbelief, to hold aloft the standard of truth and righteousness, when so many desert the field; to remain confident in the glorious outcome, the final victory of God over evil, darkness and indifference when everything seems to be against it. There is an ineffable joy in being on the right side. “The joy of the Lord” shall be the strength of all who enlist in his cause.

LOOKING BACKWARD

A yacht was cruising among the isles of Scotland, when a gale caught the frail craft off a perilous lee shore. The skipper made for a harbour leagues away. Through the darkness the yacht went plunging on her course. At length she swung into smooth water and they dropped anchor, and turning into their berths the crew went peacefully to sleep. In the morning, the owner came on deck and surveyed the scene—a little haven girt about by dark purple mountains. Looking toward the entrance, he saw a narrow channel, with sharp rocks jutting here and there, all awash with boiling surf. Turning to the old skipper, he exclaimed, “Did we pass there in the darkness?”

This is a parable of life. We know something of the goodness and mercy which have followed us all our days, but we shall never fully realize the debt we owe our unseen Guide until we are safely within the harbour.

*A.C. Frey Collection
Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook*



Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last,
Till safe in glory my anchor is cast;
Through endless ages, ever to be,
Nearer, my Saviour, still nearer to Thee,
Nearer, my Saviour, still nearer to Thee.

**Published by the Bible Fellowship Union
12 Stanley Gardens, Tring, HP23 4BS, U.K.**

email—editor@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk

www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk www.biblestudymonthly.uk