

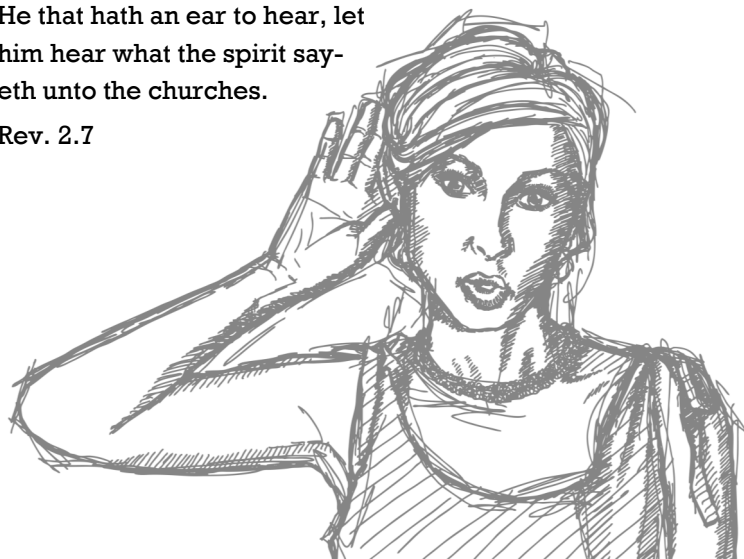
BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Volume 91 Issue 1

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He that hath an ear to hear, let
him hear what the spirit say-
eth unto the churches.

Rev. 2.7



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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 looks for the 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. (Please renew your request each year.)

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

2014

What a year to be starting. 100 years on from 1914 that changed the world so significantly. The start of World War 1 or the 'Great War' launched upon the world large losses of men fighting over small areas of land and for the first time involved men coming from most parts of the world.

It changed the face of Europe and those countries who had Kings or Queens, who were head of the government as well as head of state, did not have them afterwards, such as in Russia and Germany and were replaced by democracies. The changes were outside Europe too, and the fall of the Ottoman Empire brought changes to Palestine and other parts of the Middle East.

We are to expect a great deal of media space and time to be given over to the anniversary for that war. According to the Daily Mail, the BBC, for 2014 to 2018, has more than 2,500 hours of television and radio airtime dedicated to it, will collect 1,500 stories, photos and trench diaries, as well as preparing a 'digital cenotaph'.

What we can rejoice in is the message of peace that comes from the Bible.

There will be a time when war will cease as it says in Isa. 2.4 *"they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more."* It is a scripture that can be treasured.

1914 appeared in Chronology for the appearing of our Lord Jesus. Many thought this was going to happen when the war began as many scriptures concerning the 'time of trouble' are associated with his second appearing. However it is now 2014 and those hopes have yet to be fulfilled. Nevertheless this has given those of now living an opportunity to run for the 'prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus'. So we can now be thankful that there was time for Christians living in the 21st Century to appreciate this wonderful calling.

NAC

THE TREE OF LIFE

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of The Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God " (Rev. 2.7)

The Tree of Life figures only in the initial narrative of human history, the story of the Garden of Eden, and the final scene when the human race is in process of final reconciliation to God during the Messianic era which concludes that history so far as it is revealed in the Bible, in the words of Ezekiel the Old Testament prophet and John the writer of the book of Revelation. Man in his primal perfection and union with God had access to the Tree of Life and by that tree he lived. During the long intervening years of sin and death he is debarred from the Tree. At the end, when the reign of Christ over the earth is abolishing sin and death, and men are coming into vital union with God, the Tree is there again, its fruit for food and its leaves for healing. A side issue to the picture is that represented by the text above quoted in which the promise to every one of the Christian church of this present Age who makes his "calling and election sure" (continued page 8)

Gone from us

THE FIRES BURN LOW

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel"(1 Cor. 9.16).

The life story of the Apostle Paul is testimony to the passionate conviction with which he penned these words to the Corinthian Church. Just as fraught with meaning as his other declaration of similar import "for me to live is Christ", enshrining his fixed determination to proclaim abroad throughout his life the evangel he found on the Damascus road. The Christian faith is a missionary religion and without the evangelical fervour that leads its devotees to proclaim aloud by every means within their power the message they have received, that faith becomes a sterile and useless thing. The man who serves the Lord Christ merely to ensure his own eternal salvation and has no heed for others who also need the message is likely to find himself in the company of those others when, at the last, our Lord makes up the personnel of that devoted company which is to constitute the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 18-20), his instrument for the conversion of the world in the Millennial Age now so evidently close at hand.

There is a maxim which was quoted more frequently a couple of generations ago than it is today: "the Christian community which loses the missionary spirit signs its own death warrant". History testifies to its truth. More than one quite notable reform in the Christian world, having its rise around the person of some celebrated preacher or evangelist, has grown and prospered in the power of a significant advance in the understanding of Christian truth, a significantly clearer and deeper understanding of the Divine Plan and perhaps the importance of the times in which they live. The impulse to spread the message—and perhaps success in winning the interest and support of the many who become adherent in their turn—evokes an enthusiasm and creates a fellowship which then becomes a force in the Christian world which for a term of years plays an important part in the onward development of Christian truth.

But that generation passes, with its leaders, and its successor in its turn. And now the pioneers have nearly all gone to their Lord, and the third knows of the battles and labours—and the success and triumphs—of those

days only by repute. Then comes the fourth generation, born long after the first fresh enthusiasm has run its course and subsided and that fourth cannot even visualise the zeal and euphoria which characterised the first. So the movement becomes quieter, more addicted to submerging the original emphasis upon complete and utter consecration to the Lord's Cause to a position below the other interests of this life—career, family, spare-time pursuits. And because this is more characteristic of the denominations generally, they begin to recede into that same background and forget—if they ever understood—the advance in Divine revelation which created the fellowship which they inherited. And so the lamp goes out in the Temple of God, because Eli has gone to sleep.

But always there is Samuel, resolute and eager to maintain and hold aloft the light which galvanised those early pioneers to do the work they did. Though the love of many wax cold, as our Lord said it would; though the great deeds of the past and the proclamation of the message which was once shouted from the house-tops be heard now only in muted guise, there still remain those who once caught the vision and gave themselves in utter devotion to the furtherance of that gospel, the gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus said must be proclaimed in all the world for a witness before the end could come. These are they who can say with Jeremiah the prophet of Israel in a day which was so frighteningly similar to the day in which we now live *"his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"* (Jer. 20. 9). Though all Israel reject his message—and they did—he was determined to proclaim it to the end—and he did. And in the end he was vindicated, for what the Lord had commissioned him to declare came to pass. That outcome was to Israel's dismay but a vindication of the progress of the Divine Plan and of the prophet.

Today, more than ever, we need the spirit of Jeremiah. He began his course as a young man of perhaps twenty-five under good king Josiah when the people were true worshippers. He lived through the reigns of four successive bad kings and saw Israel desolated at the last. But he never lost faith. Like him in spirit, we today are called to continue, without faltering, the proclamation of the word which is in our hearts: *Christ is Lord; the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* AOH

REFLECTIONS ON FAITH

"Through faith we understand that the worlds came into being and still exist at the command of God." (Heb. 11.3 Weymouth).

Man is not responsible for the existence of the earth. It revolved in space long before it was leased out to his race. Were it not under the control of a merciful and wise Intelligence, it could be shaken like a paper bag and there would be few men left. The things men have built upon it would quickly disappear, but the earth itself on its strong foundations abides forever. Such is the difference between God and man, the Infinite immortal and the finite mortal.

"In the beginning God created ". The words are addressed to the readers of faith. There is no long speculation on spontaneous combustion, no scientific dissertation on a slow and complicated evolution of species from red-hot lava or dead matter, to animate, intelligent existence. In the beginning God! From that great source of invisible power came the visible. Globe vegetation, the animal kingdom and man were God-made. The same power keeps them going, holding the earth in its place. Not the earth only but the whole vast, mysterious universe, the work of his fingers, are upheld by the word of his power.

Beside all this awe-inspiring grandeur what is man, *"the microbe seeded on a sixpence"* as one of his more jocular students of the skies has been pleased to describe him? The Word of God describes him in rather more gracious terms as *"created a little lower than the angels"*. Faith accepts this statement as defining the true status of man in the ranks of living creatures. Man, made upright in the image of God. God, for the first time in his works of creation, allied to flesh and blood the Divine parent of a human race. Searching for the springs of life the scientist looks first in primeval mud, then to the apes, then to the stars, exalting his evolved creature to a place in the heavens. Faith sees man fallen from his first estate, a little lower than the angels. It is not interested in space but in salvation, the only means by which man and the earth may be restored, reconciled with the Maker of both to their original beauty and harmony.

Science has produced enough power to destroy the earth and its contents.

God safeguards the earth from any such calamity. He will save the race whose welfare he has watched through many ages, for whom He has made such bountiful provision. Man must come face to face with his Maker on his own doorstep, not in the heavens nor in the haunted swamps of the dinosaurs, but on the earth where he belongs. The intelligent, responsible human being, minted out of the dust of the earth, beautifully formed and mentally endowed with superior qualities, to rule a flourishing productive planet must attain the ideal of God's purpose.

This is faith's answer to the fears and perplexities of the modern world. The kingdom of God is beauty, peace and perfection. Through much tribulation shall the earth and her peoples enter that kingdom, but enter it they will and must, because God has spoken the word.

The Power which produced order out of chaos, the Voice which commanded light and rebuked the oceans, which put living creatures in every part of the globe, adapting them to their places, will at a fore-known hour rebuke evil. The tumults of man will cease and the earth will enjoy her rest. Because faith understands that He made the earth for his own purposes, that He produced man from its various elements, that He has kept faith with the human race, it accepts with full assurance of faith that he will complete that purpose. *"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord "*.

AOH

These things Saith He

Naming the aspect of His nature pertinent to each Church.

To Ephesus, a Great and Powerful Church, but losing zeal:

"These things saith He that Holdeth Seven Stars in His Hand."

To Smyrna, a Poor, Suffering Church, facing Martyrdom:

"These things saith He that was Dead, and Lived Again."

To Pergamun, Tolerating Teachers of Immorality:

"These things saith He that hath Sharp Two-edged Sword."

To Thyratira, Growing in Zeal but Tolerating Jezebel:

"These things saith the Son of God, who hath Eyes like Fire."

To Sardis, with a Name that it Lived, but was Dead:

"These things saith He that hath the Seven Spirits of God."

To Philadelphia, a Nobody in the city, but Faithful:

"These things said He Openeth and None Shall Shut."

To Laodicea, the Lukewarm Church:

"These things saith the Faithful and True Witness."

Halley's
Bible
Handbook

(continued from page 3) is that he also will eat of the Tree of Life at his attainment to the glory of the celestial life. There is therefore a direct link and a close association between Gen. chaps. 2 and 3, in which the Tree of Life is first mentioned in connection with the first of mankind, and Ezek. 47.7-12 with Rev. 22.1-3, both of which have to do with the final stage of man's preparation for eternity. It is significant also that in the first picture the Tree of Life is associated with the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, which because of the consequences in the Eden story becomes the symbol of death, but in the latter picture the Tree of Knowledge is no longer there. There is no more death, for it has been abolished by the Messianic work of Christ. *"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away"* (Rev. 21.4) .

All this poses the question: what is the significance of the Tree of Life in the Eden story? The very general impression among those who hold that there actually was a Garden of Eden and a literal Adam and Eve is that it was a very special kind of tree the fruit of which had the power of conferring continuous never-dying life. All the time our parents partook of its fruit they would never die; conversely, if they were debarred from the tree, death was certain. This, despite the fact that *"every tree that is ... good for food"* was separately mentioned as the support for man's physical life and the Tree of Life made to stand out as something unique. It should be borne in mind also that in the Divine arrangement death is the natural and inevitable consequence of sin. When the bond of union between God and man is severed because of sin the life-line is snapped, and continued, "eternal", life is lost because of that severance. The man then possesses only the modicum of animal vitality still residing in his material body and sooner or later that residual vitality ebbs away and the man dies. So the sentence on Adam was *"in the day that and thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"*. Whatever the nature and properties of the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of the Genesis story, man automatically lost access to it at the moment of his sin, and not as a secondary precautionary action on the part of God, even although the rather inadequate translation of Gen. 3.22 in the A.V. may seem to favour that latter view. The Most High, soliloquising after the tragedy of the Fall, knew, and declared, that man should no longer, because he could no longer, have access to the Tree of Life and so live forever. But it was the fact of his sin, and not the inability to eat of the fruit of a certain tree,

which created that situation.

It is more than possible, on the basis of the literal inerrancy of the Eden story, that the partaking of the fruit both of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were ritual acts, having a ceremonial significance expressive of the inward heart condition something like the significance of the bread and wine in the celebration of the Last Supper. In such case to partake of the Tree of Life was expressive of loyalty and allegiance to God and recognition that man's continued life depends upon the unbroken union and communion with God which comes in consequence of that loyalty and allegiance. Hence it is easy to understand that when disloyalty and rebellion had entered man's heart he no longer partook of the Tree of Life. His loyalty and allegiance was now given to the Satan who had seduced him and in partaking of the Tree of Knowledge he signified the change. He could partake of the one Tree or the other; he could not partake of both.

This then was the position from the time of the Fall onward. In a very true sense men have been partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil ever since, giving their loyalty and allegiance to the "god of this world". Because all men, even the best of them, are involved in the death conditions introduced by their first father the Tree of Life is debarred from all. As the Apostle Paul says, "*there is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rom.3.10). But this is not for ever. In the story celestial guardians were appointed to keep the way of the Tree of Life as though to preserve it and throw it open again to mankind when the time should be ripe. That can only involve one conclusion, that a time is to come in the purposes of God when the power of sin shall be overthrown and its consequences eliminated, and mankind restored to a condition of reconciliation and union with God, and logically, then have access to the Tree of Life in the sense that they affirm and maintain their loyalty and allegiance to God and walk in the ways of his righteousness for ever. Equally logically, the Tree of Knowledge disappears, for there is no more evil in the hearts of men.

This is how it is in the other two pictures of the Tree of Life presented in the Scriptures, both in settings descriptive of the Millennial Age of Christ's reign over the world. The earlier, and most descriptive, is that seen in vision by the prophet Ezekiel half a millennium before Christ, and recorded in chapter 47 of the book which bears his name. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit he saw a magnificent idealised Temple, reminiscent of the edifice built by Solomon at Jerusalem and destroyed by the

Babylonians in Ezekiel's own time, but greater and more imposing in every respect. Just as Solomon's Temple was symbolic of the Divine rule over Israel during the term of the theocracy, when their kings "sat on the throne of the Lord", so this greater Temple of Ezekiel's vision is symbolic of the future far greater Divine Kingdom of the Millennial Age, when not Israel only, but all nations and all men everywhere, will live under its influence and walk in its light. Now one feature of this Temple and its associated features was a River of Life which emerged from the central sanctuary and flowed through the countryside, bringing life and fertility to the surrounding lands—"*everything shall live where the river cometh*" (vs. 9)—until it eventually reached the barren waters of the Dead Sea and healed those waters so that they became full of fish—another symbol of life. And the banks of the river were furnished with trees, trees of life, whose fruit should be for food and whose leaves for healing. Here again in the same principle that is enshrined in the Genesis story. The Tree—the word in Genesis means trees or a grove—the Tree or Trees of Life derive their potency from the central sanctuary, where God dwells, through the medium of the River of Life. Those who partake of the Trees are thereby brought into direct contact and union with God and so long as they maintain that union by that means they will never die. This is the eternal life which every man who believes and becomes Christ's man will receive in abundant measure through him as the channel of life from God. "*I am come*" He said "*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10.10). True, during their progress through the remedial processes of the Millennial Age, the steps of repentance and conversion and dedication, of renunciation of sin and rehabilitation to the standard of righteousness, men will stand in sore need of healing, and restoration from the power of sin, and the untoward effects of their own past lives, and that is why Ezekiel said that the Tree of Life is also for healing. But the end result will be that "*all that hath breath shall praise the Lord*".

The Apostle John on Patmos (Rev.21.20-22.5), saw something of a very similar nature pointing to the same glorious culmination. He saw, not a Temple, but a City, the New Jerusalem come down to earth from God that God might dwell with man—restored and perfected man. The nations are to walk in the light of the city-and the glory of God is that which lightens it, and the presence of Christ the Messianic King(continued page 39)

GOLD

GOLD has been sought after by men in every age and clime. For gold, men have toiled and died. Lives have been spent in its accumulation, only to be left to others to waste or to spend. For this precious metal, men have left home, family, and country, taken long journeys, suffered many privations, only to see it slip through their fingers at the last. Rightly used it has been of real service. Energies have been quickened, geniuses brought to light, businesses developed, commerce extended, and hitherto unknown countries awakened into existence.

Gold is the first and last metal mentioned in the Bible. The term comes from the Hebrew *Zahab*, which means "to shine." Its name is most appropriate seeing that there is no other metal which more durably and faithfully reflects the glory of the sun. The yellow central portion of the spectrum, is observed emanating from both. The sun is a precious symbol of the great Eternal (Psalm 84: 11), and gold reasonably betokens those characteristics which are most like that living source of Life. The metal is mentioned throughout the Scriptures in connection with things divine. The golden vials, the golden lampstand, the golden table of shewbread, the golden altar of incense, the golden crown, and the golden breastplate with its precious jewels: also the ark of the testimony with its lid and cherubims of fine beaten gold. The metal found at the mines is usually attached to many impurities and alloys, it therefore needs the watchful care of the refiner, who gradually and carefully burns away the dross. Thus it is with that saintly class whom the Lord is selecting and refining, that they may offer an offering in righteousness (Mal. 3. 1-4).

God knows the metal which can stand the test,
He's seeking the purest of gold,
From earthly mines to His palace of rest
Where ages of glory unfold.

So let it gleam in a splendour of light,
As it mirrors the form above !
Till the gold is pure and shining and bright,
Reflecting His infinite love.

When the patriarch Job saw the meaning of his terrible experiences, he

gave an exclamation of triumph, "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23. 10). Likewise the apostle Peter reminds the suffering Christian, that the trial of his faith is much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire (1 Peter 1. 7).

Figuratively speaking, God has had his "vessels of gold" down through the age. As THESE have declared His praises and been loyal to the principles of truth, men have despised and hated them. Jesus foretold this in the following words, "The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15. 20). The apostle, when addressing the murderers of Jesus, said, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers " (Acts 3.17). It is clearly God's will that the true saints are hidden from the eyes of men. Many have been looked upon as heretics by those who also have taken to themselves the name of Christ, and who usually lead a self-satisfied kind of life. This condition of affairs was pictured long ago through the prophet, "*How is gold become dim! how is most fine gold changed! The hallowed stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold. How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!*" (Lam. 4. 1-2).

Great is the difference between the Lord's true people, and those who are lukewarm with respect to spiritual truth. The message to the church of the Laodiceans (Rev. 3. 14-21), is today particularly applicable. The Lord exhorts His people in the following words, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed—As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Happy they, who are feasting on the wonderful viands of truth, due at this time. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5: 6).

Gold is amazingly ductile and malleable. It is capable of being beaten out into sheets so fine, that it would take a quarter of a million to produce an inch in thickness. One ounce of pure gold may cover an area of 1466

square feet providing it is thin enough. Gold lace is often made of gold wire, so finely attenuated, that a mile of it would weigh an ounce. Thus is illustrated the vast and extensive powers of divinity. He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. He is the source of all life and potentiality, and His glory floods the universe. His power is ever within His grasp. He has only to say the word and He could gather unto Himself his spirit of life, and all flesh would cease to exist (Job 34. 14-15).

With marvellous condescension the beneficent Creator has promised to grant to a select number of human beings an opportunity to become sharers of His own intrinsic nature. "*Whereby are given unto us, exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might become partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1. 4). Possessed with immortality and those glorious dispositions of mercy, justice, goodness, kindness, fortitude and love, these chosen heirs will be well able to bless and uplift the whole world of mankind, from degradation and shame. O hail this day of grace and judgment,— "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world!" (1 Cor. 6. 2). This company of saints will constitute the Holy City the central figure being the Lord Jesus "who by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2. 9).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. 21 : 2-3). The city is likened unto "pure gold and the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it" (Rev. 21. 18-24).

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest ;
Beneath thy contemplation, sink heart and voice opprest.
I know not, oh, I know not, what holy joys are there :
What radiancy and glory, what bliss beyond compare !

They stand those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel, and all the martyr throng,
There is the throne of David, and there from toil released,
The shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast,

And they who with their Leader, have conquered in the fight,
For ever and forever are clad in robes oft white.
O land that see'st no sorrow! O state that fear'st no strife!
O royal land of flowers ! O realm and home of life.

A word in conclusion with reference to **copper**, which so often occurs in the Scriptures under the name of brass (by the way brass is an alloy, while copper is a pure metal). Copper has some resemblance to gold, but is more ruddy and by no means so precious. We are reminded that Adam whose name signifies "of the ruddy earth" was made in the mental. and moral likeness of his Maker (Gen. 1. 26). In the Bible, copper denotes humanity or human conditions. The altar in the court of the tabernacle was overlaid with this metal and shows how the sacrificing priests were subject to human conditions. The laver depicted the same truth and this was made from the copper mirrors, used by the women of Israel (Exo. 38. 1-8). The most striking use of this metal was the serpent of copper made by Moses in the wilderness (Num. 21. 9). This depicted the humanity of Jesus "made sin," "and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3. 14-15).

FL



*And the almond tree
shall flourish. Eccl. 12.5*

The almond tree blossoms early in the year; in Palestine its pinkish blossoms may even be seen in January. Its Hebrew name *shaked* means 'waker'. For the Jews it was a 'wake-tree', a harbinger of spring, a reminder that winter was passing, that soon flowers would cover the earth and birds sing and the voice of the turtle-dove be heard once again in the land.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

It is generally agreed that the Third Epistle of John was written at about the same time as the Second Epistle while John was living at Ephesus. Like the Second, which was addressed to a Christian woman, Kyria, this one is a personal letter, its recipient being a brother in the Lord named Gaius. The identity of this Gaius is unknown; it is not likely that he can be identified with either man of that name mentioned in the New Testament. We know of Gaius of Derbe in Macedonia (Acts 19. 29 and 20. 4) and Gaius of Corinth (Rom. 16. 23 and 1 Cor. 1. 14) but these texts refer to a time probably forty years previous to John's epistle. Gaius was a very common name and it is more likely that the recipient of John's third epistle is otherwise quite unknown to history. There was a Gaius who was Bishop of Pergamos at about this time and it is just possible that this might be the one to whom John is writing but we really do not know. It is perhaps sufficient to appreciate the evident fact that here is a brother who was well-beloved by John and enjoyed his high esteem. *"The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth."* That is how he opens his letter, and what a revealing opening it is! John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and his own loving disposition is proverbial. It is in little touches like this verse that we see how John retained the right to be called the "loving disciple" even into old age. It is said of him that when he was so old that he had to be carried into the meetings, and was quite unable to preach to the brethren as in past years, he used to repeat just the one exhortation "Little children, love one another". That was the end of his ministry and his service, the sum and substance of all that he had ever said or done.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." The expression "above all things" is not correctly translated. It would be more accurately rendered "in all respects". We may note from this verse that John does not shrink from wishing temporal blessings of prosperity and health for his friend Gaius. It is true that he qualifies it by saying "even as thy soul prospereth"; evidently he wishes temporal and spiritual health and well-being to go hand in hand together. That surely is a sane and balanced outlook upon our position as "New Creations" having the "all-things-new" mind operating in a body which is still very much tied to and dependent upon

this old world. John, for all his character of loving-mindedness, was no impractical mystic. He knew full well that the good things of this world—health, prosperity, ability, and so on—could be of great use in the service of the King of Kings, and having confidence that Gaius was so devotedly consecrated to his Lord that the possession of such blessings would by no means draw him away, John wishes for him prosperity and health, that he might be able to serve his Lord the better.

"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

It would appear from the succeeding verses that some little company of brethren has gone out on a kind of tour, preaching the Gospel. Gaius was one who had received them hospitably and sent them on their way with a "God-speed". Coming to John, they had brought this good report of Gaius which so rejoiced the aged Apostle's heart. In these first four verses the expression "the truth" used with the significance that we ourselves attach to the word, occurs four times. "The Truth" was a precious thing to John, just as it should be—and usually is—to us. He has no greater joy than to receive tidings assuring him that his children, his disciples, his converts, are still walking and rejoicing in the Truth. The trials and vicissitudes and disappointments and disillusionments of a long life had not destroyed or weakened his appreciation of the Truth or his love for the Truth. Something like sixty years had passed over his head since that memorable day when he had stood upon Olivet and watched his Lord ascend into the cloud and disappear from sight, but that long lapse of time had not, shaken his faith nor replaced zeal by apathy. He was as sure and certain as at the beginning and just as eager to bring new converts into the fold of the Church. "I have no greater joy". Happy are we if we can say the same thing and feel that notwithstanding all we have experienced in life's journey, despite all the failures and disappointments, we are as convinced and enthusiastic as ever we were in those halcyon days, so far away now, when "the Truth" was a new and precious thing to us.

"Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the Church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt

do well; because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to remember such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth."

This is the passage on which is based the belief that there had been an expedition, as it were, of missionary brethren from Ephesus, passing through the towns and villages of Asia preaching the Word, and that in so doing they had stopped at the house of Gaius and been hospitably entertained. True to the best traditions of Christian ministry, these had gone forth on their work of love, taking no payment or even, perhaps, gifts of any kind from those to whom they were sent. They laboured only for their souls, seeking to win them to Christ. John draws the attention of Gaius to this fact and points out what meritorious service it is to entertain and care for the wants of such. Our thoughts might well turn to our own time. It is not always possible to be one of the heralds of salvation who go forth into the world to preach the gospel—not always possible to undertake "active service" in the execution of the Church's age-old commission. And yet there is always something we can do towards the great work. It may be assisting in the provision of the material resources necessary to the promulgation of the message, helping to bear the cost, or performing with faithful diligence some of the hundred and one little "behind-the-scenes" duties that have to be carried out if the message is to go forth with good effect. It may be that one's part lies in the ministry of prayer, on behalf of the "travellers" as they go "into all the world". It may be in that other ministry, the Ministry of Encouragement, which has so necessary a function to perform on behalf of those whose labours so often, especially in this our day, are apparently so unfruitful. Depend upon it, there is something for each member of Christ's church to do in the great work of making known the glory of Divine truth and the Plan of God, and those who diligently apply themselves to the full exercise of such talents and abilities as they have will earn the Apostle's approving words here to his friend Gaius "Thou shalt do well".

To be continued

AOH

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. John 10.4

HUSHED WAS THE EVENING HYMN

Hushed was the evening hymn,
The temple courts were dark,
The lamp was burning dim
Before the sacred ark,
When suddenly a voice divine
Rang through the silence of the shrine.

O give me Samuel's ear-
The open ear, O Lord !
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word;
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all.

O give me Samuel's heart !
A lowly heart, that waits
When in Thy house Thou art;
Or watches at Thy gates
By day and night—a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will.

O give me Samuel's mind !
A sweet un murmuring faith,
Obedient and resigned
To Thee in life and death;
That I may read with childlike eyes,
Truths that are hidden from the wise.

This hymn is inspired by the account in 1 Samuel chapter 3, especially verse 10 which says, 'Speak, for thy servant heareth', and comes from the account where the boy Samuel hears a voice and presumes that it is his master Eli the High Priest at Shiloh, who was by then old with poor eyesight. Only to discover that it was the voice of the LORD. It is this act and example of listening that comes across so clearly in the second

verse.

The words are written by the poet and Presbyterian minister James Drummond Burns (1823-1864) and comes from a book, 'The Evening Hymn (1857)'.

Burns was born in Edinburgh, a graduate from Edinburgh University and was a minister in Scotland before moving to Madeira for health reasons, where he was minister before becoming a minister in Hampstead (London). He died in France, but was buried in the historic Highgate Cemetery in London. According to hymnary.org this hymn has now been published in 190 hymnals

The tune that it is set to is called 'Samuel'. It was composed by Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842–1900) of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, known for works such as 'Pirates of Penzance' and 'The Mikado'. He was a Londoner born in Lambeth and raised in Chelsea, being musical from an early age he became a soloist in the boys choir at the Chapel Royal.

He did others works too such as 'The Prodigal Son' based on the passages in Luke 15.11-32 where he concentrated on the relationship between father and the prodigal son.

He was prolific as a composer and arranger of hymns. His other tunes include St. Gertrude (Onward Christian Soldiers), Bishopsgarth (My life flows on in endless song), Noel (It came upon a midnight clear), Nearer Home (Jesus, my strength, my hope) and Constance (I've found a friend; O! such a friend !). Therefore the tune Samuel is one of his many works, which has been such lovely surprise.

NAC

With me there walks a Presence
Unseen to mortal view,
Hearing each word I utter,
Looking at all I do,
Watching to see what power
The Truth to me will impart,
Longing to see His image
Growing within my heart.

Poems of Dawn

SAMUEL, GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

I. Youth

"And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision... And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli." (1 Sam. 3. 1.).

They were dark days in Israel, those days when the lamp of God was going out in the Temple of God, and the vision had become to all as a book that was sealed. It was a day of old men, a day in which the inspiration and fervour of youth had been lost in a timorous and apathetic old age. The leaders of the people, who for the time they had known the God of Israel and his mighty power should have administered their charge with the maturity and mellowness of character that a life-time of service in Divine things can give, had become spiritually blinded, and their eyes were darkened, and they knew not that the holy and royal nation was already a long way from the covenant God had made with their fathers. The Judges had ruled Israel for several centuries; in the first days of the settlement in the land, immediately after its conquest at the time of the Exodus, they had been upright and noble men, men of insight and determination, men who went in the power and strength of God, and who prospered accordingly. But the rule of the Judges had grown old, and the stirring days of Joshua and the Conquest were as far away from them as the days of Queen Elizabeth and the Spanish Armada are to us now; and as remote in the minds of leaders and people. So the nation languished and fell under the power of its enemies, the while judges and priests alike accepted the privileges and emoluments of their respective positions and ignored their obligations.

The time was ripe for a change. In one more generation there were to be kings in Israel, with all of the glory and power, patriotic fervour and national pride—and all, too, of oppression and misery—that the rule of kings involves. But the change had to come; the old system of rule by judges could no longer serve the multiplying interests of the developing nation, and the Judges were doomed. But in their passing, and before they passed, God raised up one who should be the glory of the old order and the guiding star of the new—Samuel, the last and the greatest of the Judges.

He was such a small boy, this child whom Hannah, in the love and adoration of her heart, had brought to the sanctuary to serve the Lord God for ever. None could have guessed then that he was destined in after days to guide the nation through one of the most perilous times of its career. Probably very few of the people knew that he was there at all; he must have spent much of his time in the priests' living apartments attached to the sanctuary, employed in the performance of trivial menial duties for the High Priest, and—who can doubt it?—learning with assiduity everything about the laws of God and his dealings with his people Israel that the aged Eli was able to teach him.

So the years rolled by, and Israel departed farther and farther from the Lord. The child would be about six years old when his mother brought him to the sanctuary. He could not have been less than fourteen when the great thing happened. And in all those intervening years he was laying the foundations of his future life of service, in the quietness and seclusion of the sanctuary, storing up in his receptive mind the details of his people's history, of their covenant with God and their holy calling, of God's promises and intentions with respect to their future, and his determination that one day evil should be done away and all the earth filled with his glory. The principles of truth and justice, of love and mercy, became embedded in the boy's character and moulded his outlook, even although as yet he had no opportunity to learn anything of the outside world where those principles were so universally despised and disesteemed.

So it came to pass, one quiet night, when the countryside around Shiloh was bathed in the silver light of the moon sailing serenely across the heavens, that the light of the seven-branched lampstand in the Holy of the sanctuary flickered uncertainly as the lamp wicks tried unavailingly to extract the last scanty drops of oil from the vessels. It was the duty of the priests to keep that lampstand trimmed and filled so that the light should burn perpetually. But they were neglectful of their duty, and Eli, the old High Priest, was too apathetic either to see that they performed their task or to reprove them for not doing it. And as it flickered, casting huge and grotesque shadows on the wall and ceiling of the Holy, there came from behind the Vail, where the Ark of the Covenant reposed in solitary splendour within the Holiest of all, a Voice.

"Samuel!"

The lad was not asleep. He was laid down in his place, in one of the little apartments that flanked the sanctuary. Perhaps he was pondering over the things he saw and heard every day, puzzling over the apparent inconsistency of that which Eli was teaching him and the manner in which Eli and his sons conducted their sacred mission. Maybe he was thinking of the things he in his turn would do for God when he was grown up and able to engage in the service of which, more than anything else, he wanted to be a minister. He might have wondered how it could come about, for he was not a priest and could never be a priest; he was not of the family of Levi and only those who came of Levi could be priests. And yet he wanted to serve his God with all the ardour and zeal of his young heart. Surely there could be some way! The need was great; he realised that now. He had seen something of the state of Israel's affairs in the incidents that took place in and around the sanctuary itself, and gleaned some understanding of the position from the officers who came from time to time with their sacrifices. He wanted so badly to serve; he was only a lad, but surely there was something he could do. Surely God could make use of him somewhere-

"Samuel!"

He sat up, listening. The voice had been soft, but clear. It seemed to have come from the sanctuary itself, but of course that could not be. No one would be in there at this time of night and even if they had they would not have called him. He was not allowed to enter where only priests might set foot. It must have been Eli, in need of some small service. He rose and went softly into the High Priest's apartment. The older man seemed to be asleep.

"Here am I; for thou calledst me." He had to speak twice to gain the other's attention. Eli sat up. It was a few moments before he could take in the situation.

"I called not, my son", he said. "Lie down again".

Obediently, the lad returned to his place and lay down. His thoughts went back into their accustomed channel. The night was very quiet and the hour was late, but he was not tired. His mind was alert, active.

"Samuel!"

Roused from sleep for the third time, Eli looked grave. This was no

ordinary thing. The lad was not given to idle fancies. He had evidently heard something. Dim memories of his own youth, when he himself had been in closer touch with God than he seemed to be nowadays, filtered into his mind. Perhaps—if an angel had spoken to the lad—

"Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It was with beating heart that the boy went back to his place and lay down, eyes wide open, ears alert. So the Voice *had* come from the sanctuary, after all. And It had called him; the Voice of God had called him...

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

The grey light of dawn was filtering in and revealing the outlines of his simply furnished room. He must go presently and open the outer doors of the people's court, for some would be there with sacrifices which they required offering to cleanse them from petty uncleannesses and defilements. And then he must tell Eli. He feared to do so, for he revered the old man and it was a staggering blow to learn that his teacher and mentor from childhood had passed under the judgment of God; must be deprived of his priesthood, his family to remain under Divine interdict for ever. He had never dreamed that such things could be, but now he realised that there was such a thing as Divine judgment. It was a sobering thought; his teacher and instructor had failed him; his idol had feet of clay. He must find another guide, another leader. Where should he find him? Where should he obtain the guidance he knew that he needed that he might be flitted to take up the work of God.

And then he remembered the voice from the Sanctuary.

How often, in years much nearer to us than the days of Eli and Samuel, have the old men failed to measure up to the greatness of their privilege, and forsworn the zeal, the faith, the largeness of vision and the spirit of progress which characterised their early youth, and so failed the younger ones who have looked up to them as fathers in the faith. The cumulative disappointments and disillusionments of mounting years, no less than the instinctive desire to protect what one has built against the disintegrating

effects of times and change, often produces in the outlook of the elder in the way, an attitude the complete antithesis of that which characterised his early days. Where once he sought to blaze a new trail through the unknown country that lay between him and his and the heavenly Kingdom, he now seeks but to wall round the little preserve he has made for himself. Where once he looked to the future with eyes of eager anticipation he now looks back over the past with thoughts only of retrospect. Where once he followed the leading of the Spirit, blowing where it listeth, he now wants only to protect the circle of Truth which he has drawn through the years from any fresh incursion of that same Spirit. And so, unconsciously perhaps, not realising what he does, he resents the freshness and zeal of the younger generation, fails to sympathise with their characteristic impulses and immature understanding, and as often as not succeeds in driving them away from the life of service and faith that could have been theirs had right guidance been given them. Thank God that it is not always so amongst us; that there are some, advanced in the tale of earthly years, who have attained a mellowness and maturity of Christian character which gives them to look with kindly and understanding eyes upon those who must needs pick up the torch of Truth from their own failing hands and carry it onward to greater heights. Their own early zealous activity and ardent minds, denied full exercise now because of advancing years, finds its satisfaction in the encouragement of their sons in the faith, and in understanding counsel to those who are seeking to; follow in the way they themselves walked these many years since. There is no need for the story of Eli to be repeated in our day; no need for the lamp of God to burn dim in the Temple of God. Eli and Samuel can so easily walk and work together in loving understanding and harmony, each contributing that for which he is fitted; the younger, action and tumultuous zeal; the elder, maturity of thought and quiet counsel in the things of God. In such manner may we all play our part in maintaining the radiant light of Divine Truth in the world, and pass, at length, beyond the inner Vail in the quiet satisfaction of a covenant with God fulfilled to the end. *"I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith."* There is no need for our younger ones to be disappointed in their elders as was Samuel in Eli.

The boy had learnt a great lesson. Henceforth his instruction. heretofore at the hand of an earthly minister, was to come from God himself. A great

step forward had been taken. He was no longer a "babe" in the faith; no longer imbibing only the "milk" of the Word". Upon that morning when Samuel opened the doors of the House of the Lord with the consciousness of the midnight revelation in his mind, he saw all things become new. The child Samuel was no more; henceforth he was a man, a man destined to be a power for God in Israel. (To be continued.)

AOH

GAINSBOUGH HOUSE

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. (Gen.3.8)

A NOTE ON THE ADVENT

The coming of Christ is an event to be eagerly anticipated. Says the Psalmist, "*Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad . . . let the field be joyful, and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth*" (Psa. 96. 11-13). An event which is depicted in such glowing terms can only be beneficial to those who experience it.

The general idea, inherited from the past, is that the Advent will be a sudden and unexpected event. The world will be going about its business, unsuspecting, when without warning Christ will appear in the sky with attendant angels, descending to earth, where He will immediately raise the dead from their graves and summon all, dead and living, before his throne for judgment. All this comes from the poetic imagery of the Bible, imagery which has to be used in order to convey the spiritual truths involved to people of many different mental outlooks in many different generations. In this century it is necessary to interpret the Scriptures in the light of our present understanding of the purposes of God and the nature of both the other world and this world.

The revelation of Christ to the world at his Second Advent is a progressive one, embracing a great many significant events, some in this world and perceived by men, some in the other world and therefore not perceived by men. This fact was understood by some Christian thinkers so far back as the second decade of the 19th century, when the apparent imminence of the Advent began to be advocated. At a series of conferences organised by well-known British ministers and Church leaders from 1826 onward one of the theses, not universally accepted but finding definite support in many quarters, was that the Advent consists of two stages, a preliminary one in which the Lord would be present unknown to men in general for the purpose of gathering his Church to heavenly glory, followed by a second stage at which He would be revealed with his Church to the whole world. This view of the Advent, originating in England, was later taken up by some sections of the American Adventist movement and is now more fully developed. The modern view is that this unseen phase of the Advent embraces the whole of the last century and

that the returned Lord can be thought of as standing behind the scenes overruling and directing the course of world events so that the final disintegration of world power marking the actual end of the Age will come at the Divinely pre-ordained moment, when Christ will be revealed to all men in the glory of his Advent and take his place as earth's new universal ruler.

What is to be the nature of that revelation? How will men realise his coming and accept his rule when He thus appears? Is He to be manifested to the natural sight, or in the persons of some among men who are to be his representatives, or by the logic of events? We are of course dealing here with the impact of the spiritual world upon the material, the celestial upon the terrestrial, and so little is known about that celestial world. Modern knowledge makes it possible to think of that world and its occupants existing on a different wave-length, so to speak, so that whilst being a real world, a real environment constituting the home of real beings adapted to that environment, such beings and such environment are of necessity imperceptible to human senses. Our Lord after his resurrection did break through the barrier to manifest himself visibly to his followers, once as a gardener, again as a stranger, once to Thomas in his pre-crucifixion likeness—and yet on the other hand, to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road in another-worldly glory so unendurable that Saul fell to the ground, temporarily blinded. It may be discreet to say that it is not possible to be dogmatic as to the means by which our Lord will be manifested to men at his revealing, only that it will be completely satisfactory and conclusive to the observers. And it may well be that the most telling evidence will be the increasingly obvious fact that the evil and disruptive forces and institutions of the world are being progressively curbed and eliminated by a power which men can neither understand nor withstand. There will not be wanting, at any time during this transition period between this world and the next, men and women who know what these things mean, have been expecting and awaiting them, and will proclaim their significance in no uncertain voice.

AOH

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

"For who hath despised the day of small things?"(Zechariah 4.10)

Who or what are the small things? When is this day? These are some of the questions on meeting this scripture.

First we should look at the writer Zechariah and what was happening in the land of Israel at that time. Zechariah, meaning 'God has remembered', was a prophet in Israel writing in around 520 BC. This was after the return of the Israelites to the promised land following their 70 year exile in Babylon. It was during the period when they were rebuilding the Temple. In fact the rebuilding of the Temple was started under Zerubbabel who is mentioned in chapter 4 of Zechariah. We are given to believe that that Zerubbabel's temple was inferior to that of Solomon's. It was only 60 cubits high, a half that of Solomon's temple although broader being 60 cubits rather than 40, also there was no Ark of the Covenant or Urim and Thumin, so it is presumed that from the beginning, that it would be inferior. There was probably some sense of disappointment. Haggai 2.3 reflects this when it says, *"who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory ? and how do ye see it now ? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"*. Simply put it was smaller and less glorious.

The suggestion here is this is the day of small things and that Christians are part of that work. The apostle Paul himself said in Acts 26.22 that *"he witnessed both to **small** and great"*1 Cor. 1. 26-27, *"for ye see your calling brethren how that no many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world."* Or to put it another way, this time is the Gospel age, in which we live, and applies to ordinary people.

We ought not to be surprised. In most of the people God worked with, in some way, were small, like the nation of Israel. During the New Testament times, Jesus was born into a humble family of carpenters, not in a palace and Peter was just a fisherman from Galilee. It was a small beginning, but sufficient to build a 'little flock'. (Luke 12.32)

Let's look upon some of the parts of the picture in more detail and see if and how they could refer to us. Firstly verse 7, in Zechariah 4 it talks about a **headstone**. A headstone or keystone in architecture appears to be an arch or a top stone of a vault, which supports the weight above it. This could easily picture our Lord Jesus. 1Peter 2. 6 says *"Jesus Christ,*

Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded ". Therefore we get the literal temple picturing the spiritual temple. Heb. 9.11 talks of Christ being an high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, not of this building. Eph. 2.19-22 *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto and holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit."* 1 Cor. 3.16 says *"know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you."* Jesus therefore is the headstone and foundation of the church, and this day if we build upon his pattern, then we can be the little stones which make up the building.

The headstone would be brought forth with **‘shoutings, crying grace’**. During the building, this could have been the joy with which the foundations of this second temple were greeted once the foundations were finished. It says ‘they sang praises together’, ‘all the people shouted with a great shout’ and recorded ‘the noise of the shout of joy’ (Ezra 3.11-13). But where does the grace come from? John 1.14 *"the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth"*. Then John the Baptist goes on to say of Jesus, *"Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"*.

The link here is that we rejoice and give thanks because of God’s grace that came to us via Jesus Christ. The statement in Zechariah talks about shouting for grace. But if we take the supposition that it is the day of small things then when hymns are sung, they could be said to be ‘grace shoutings’ and we rejoice in the grace that has been shown to us, which we have done nothing to deserve. Don’t we rejoice and sing praises.

The olive trees (v.11) are another feature of Zechariah 4. What are they and do they have any impact upon the day of small things? Verse 14 of Zech. 4 has already told us that the olive trees are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. One suggestion I read of this was that they relate to the Old and New Testaments now. This would make sense for us, that as far as we are concerned now, that they reveal so much to us of God’s plan and character, especially if we call ourselves

students of the bible. The two parts of the bible are relevant to us small things as, where would we be without them? But what would it have represented then, given that this was written after the Babylonian captivity, could it be the law and the prophets, the former being the Pentateuch and the remainder including prophecies. Some commentators say that at the time they would relate them to Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the governor. Other commentators now say it represents Christ and the Holy Spirit. It seems however similar to Moses and Elijah as in the transfiguration. One representing the law, and the other the prophets, who wrote about the coming of Christ and the promises of things to come. They bear witness to God. One looking back one pointing forwards. However the picture has its backdrop with the building of the second temple, where there was previously the tabernacle and then the Temple built by Solomon. We have the scriptures of us being stones as part of a temple. Could it be that the Bible is a witness and those of the household of faith also a witness, one that is yet continuing and being acted out every day. One etched in the past still acting as a witness. 2 Cor. 3. 6 which says we are able ministers of the New Testament. The Bible is as the building and we the users, the congregation, believing in that record written two thousand and more years ago.

Zechariah was sent to **encourage** the Israelites while telling them not to expect prosperity, but nevertheless telling them that God would be with them, if they were faithful, and in their small way they would be accomplishing his purposes at that time. This is not unlike the story of Samson (Judges 13. 5), who began to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And through Samson this limited work was done.

Here are a few examples of Britons who did their small work in the 'day of small things'.

John Wycliffe was a radical man for the 14th century. He was convinced that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language. To that end he translated the Bible into English, albeit from the Vulgate version in Latin rather than from the earliest Greek manuscripts. He thought that the Bible alone is authoritative. He felt the church should be poor like they were in the days of the apostles at a time when the established church, the Roman Catholic Church, was very rich and when those in the upper echelons of the Catholic Church in this and other countries lived like dukes and nobleman. He sent his own poor priests, 'the Lollards' out to preach. He believed in justification by faith, though this is largely

accredited to Luther however it seems Wycliffe realized this doctrine. His quote goes as follows, 'If a man believe in Christ , and make a point of his belief, then the promise that God hath made to come into the land of light shall be given by virtue of light of Christ, to all men that make this the chief matter.' It roughly says if anyone believes in Christ and makes it the chief matter of his life then God will come into his life because of Christ. Also it seems he believed the elect of God were those predestined to be so. This was a great change where they reckoned you had to be part of the Catholic Church in those days to be saved and could be excommunicated, as if that would exclude you from being of the elect. Wycliffe saw it was possible whether you were in those days a Pope, Archbishop, King or queen had no correlation to whether you were part of the elect and that no person on earth can decide who is of the elect. This last idea has resonance with the day of small things because being a big thing does not help you.

I think we could see Wycliffe may have been a small thing of the day. He was not wealthy, had limited power. Yet he had zeal, he worked, educated and did what he could and his path in the early days of Protestantism sets us on a path where we can be today.

I picked up a little old book, 'The Memoirs of Dr. **John Edgar by his sister Minna**'. It is a small book being only 64 pages and as small as the hand of a little child. But nevertheless in the course of her narrative managed to touch upon important subjects like, 'where are the dead?', concerns about non-believing family members and how our faith comes into play when someone close in our natural or spiritual family dies. Her book only described reaching only a small fraction of those living in Britain but they responded to the prompting of the spirit and the knowledge of the plan of God and they went forth and embraced the life that God had given them here with enthusiasm.

What can we learn from Zechariah? We can encourage each other. The Jews were discouraged whilst rebuilding the Temple. After they got started enthusiastically, the pace slowed and the work rate fell. Therefore it is possible that we can be discouraged. A warning for our time comes from the Laodicean messenger (Rev. 3. 14-22) which cautions us about being lukewarm, when we could be hot or cold.

At that time, other peoples around them tried to discourage them. The local Samaritans tried all sorts of things to interrupt the work. This seems to be like the world in Britain where people are lovers of pleasure rather

than lovers of God (2 Tim.3.4) There is a general disregard for Christian ideas. Christian ideas are held in little value. The way religion has been used to justify wars as holy wars, is one of many reasons why people have rejected religion in general. But this should not get us down.

Jesus himself in John 16.33 said *"in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"*. Jesus himself had tribulation. Isa. 53 foretold the tribulation. In verse 9 it says he made his grave with the wicked, he was in prison as in verse 8, verse 12 says he was numbered with thy transgressors. The death, the world accorded him, was as if he were there lowest, we may even suggest a humiliating death in public like some public entertainment, nearly all dignity stripped away, the death of a small person. But here we get another contrast between small and great. In verse 12 of Isa. 53 it says *"he will get a portion with the great "*.

Other contrasts of small and then great come in 1 Cor 15. 42 - 43 which says, *' For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality'*. See where we all start small. The plaque of John Edgar's coffin, 'sown in weakness, raised in power' following this idea of starting small and being small now in this age.

God said Zerubbabel's temple would be finished and it was finished. Also the spiritual temple will be finished when the last member has made their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1.10). Phil 1. 6 says *"being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ."*

It seems we are in such a day and the things we do can be called small things. We have the benefit of the scriptures to help us and the grace of God to start us on our road and as surely as the second temple was finished according to the standard the Lord wished it, so this spiritual temple will be finished. Also we can take encouragement from the examples of others in this scriptures to finish our course knowing the commendation in Luke 19;13 to *" occupy till I come"*.

NAC

"May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. May those who love your salvation say everyone, God is great". Psalm 70.4

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Chapter 2—The Kindergarten Lesson Set

It is not possible for us to say how far God revealed His holiness to our first father in Eden's sinless days. That God forewarned him about the fatal consequences of a rebellious act, we know quite well. How far he understood its deadly moral nature, we may not easily say. Enough to know he dared to risk the sinful act with open eyes, knowing quite well that he would die. On that point his knowledge was complete; but how far he had come to understand the attitude of his Creator-God towards the principle of sin (as distinct from an act of sin) is another point we may not know. It could not be, in the short time he had lived that he had comprehended everything about his God. He knew that he was God's handiwork; he knew his consort, Eve, was God's gift. He knew that God had made his lovely home and filled it with all desirable things. Hence he would know God as a Creator, mighty and bountiful, Who would have the right to expect obedience in the use of all His gifts.

But did God tell him of that vehement detestation of sin which burned, fiercer than any flame, within the Creator's heart? Did God make him to know how zealously He would uphold the Universal Law against every infraction of its terms? In short, did God reveal to Adam that He was a "Holy" God - as distinct from a Creative God - the sworn enemy of sin; and that, cost Him what it may, He would fight it with all His power till the last trace of it was gone? We may not know for sure, for Adam's Eden days were few. Doubtless God would have told him more as time went by, so that he would know that every act falls into line with this or that of the two basic principles of holiness or sin. Had he remained at peace with God he would have learned those deeper things which angel visitants could tell about their God and his.

In their own estate, where sin did not then abound, these heavenly messengers can understand the awful Majesty of the Eternal God; for they have seen and known the terrible effects of sin. There was a time when an angel Prince led revolt against the Heavenly Throne and brought abasement to himself and those he led astray. Divine power had arisen to the task imposed and thrown around the fallen host bands of darkness and restraint. Thrust down from heaven and chained in the dark depths of "*Tartarus*", they had been made to feel the scorching fire of Divine zeal

against sin. Those holy messengers who maintained their first estate could have caused God's human son to learn and deeply realise that God could never countenance sin, not permit the sinner to abide one instant before His Holy face. By observation and by contact they had learned how unchangeably holy was their God, and how with omnipotent and omniscient power He stood pledged eternally to uphold the Truth and defend the Right. All this Adam might, in time, have learned. The angelic visitant could have made known how when sin raised its ugly head the peace within the heart of God remained undisturbed, yet there brake forth with more than volcanic force a holy displeasure which revealed, to all who saw, how unfathomably deep was the Divine repugnance to haughty pride, rash act, or insubordinate word. Moreover, the earthly son also might have learned how these heavenly sons, possessed of holiest desires, were able to find and appreciate hallowed fellowship with God, He as Creator and Sovereign over all; they as created and subject Spirits obeying His behests. No need of any kind existed for God to hide away from them, nor they to be forbidden access to His face, but subject only to such decorum well-suited to that August Court, they went unfearful into the Presence, and enjoyed unscathed "the burning bliss" of that great Eternal Light; the fervent response of each angel heart meeting with ready accord the holier desires of the Heavenly Throne. All this Adam might have come to know; and knowing and comprehending it, this knowledge might have anchored him also to the Heavenly Throne with chains stronger than steel.

How greatly otherwise must it be where sin comes in! God's pity for the sinner may be great, but God cannot parley with the sin. No provision for excuse had been made in the Divine Code of Law, and He who had to maintain that Law could show no toleration of the sin. Of necessity God must separate Himself from the sin, and in so doing, the sinner too. No greater welcome to His Presence could be offered to rebellious men than to the sin itself; for to such rebellious men the Holy God could be no other than a consuming fire. When therefore, for some wiser end, Omniscience Divine determined that the state of sin should be allowed to stand, the very intensity of Holiness Divine could only mean that God must withdraw Himself—He must draw apart from men.

How quickly amid those Eden bowers the sense of guilt and shame

disclosed itself. The shrinking sinner fled away, coming not at an evening hour with ready heart into the presence of his God. Since morning sun arose a fearful change had taken place, for sin had won the day and spread its empire over man. The unhallowed influence of Lucifer had triumphed, for the time, over the hallowed influence of God. Sin had stormed the heart of man and sin-consciousness had been born. Sin-consciousness dared not seek the face of God but shrank into the shade to hide. Called from his hiding place to meet the "Judge" the shamefaced sinner came forth to hear his doom. "Sin", naked and ashamed, stood face to face with Holiness and hung its head while putting up its lame defense; then Holiness withdrew and man was driven forth to die. The gift of life and happiness, misused, the Giver took back the gift, and left the sinner to his fate. Sent forth outside the gates of Paradise, God came no more to meet with man, and man, in contact daily with his sin lost his fine sense of righteousness, and, as time passed on, prostrated himself to stocks and stones and creeping things. The Holy One withdrawn, the inner heart-need being unfed, man must needs bow himself to some meaner thing, and sink himself to lower depths in the defiling slime of sin.

Throughout the corrupted years until Abraham came from Ur, in answer to God's call, but little added light was given. Enoch spake of recompense for ungodly men (Jude 15). Noah warned a wicked world, but little heed was given! The light which nature gave bore witness to Eternal Power and Deity (Rom. 1. 20) but rebellious men gave it no ear. They preferred the ways of sin, and man, made subject to demoniac power, sank down into corruption's deeper depths. Yet though the whole world was thus steeped in sin, increasing every day, vile cities arising on every side, God told the faithful pilgrim (who, leaving Chaldea's idol-serving land, came to sojourn with Canaan's polluted hosts, that), spite of all the sinful filth, He purposed yet to bless and win the hearts of men. God told that Pilgrim Father that all that he desired to do, He surely could perform, "I am the Almighty God...I will...*I will*...I WILL..." (Gen. 17. 1-8). So spake the Most High God to that worthy man. His theme was "power"—Almighty Power to carry out His Sovereign Will. Two thousand years had passed; throughout them all God had maintained the severity of His law. No tender message came from God until He told this chosen man He had a plan to bless the world and power to see it through; and let us note God did not point out and stress the fact or heinousness of sin to that good man.

Apart from one grim day when Almighty God came down to burn the cities of the plain, He made no reference to sin in any of His talks with Abraham. At no time throughout his life did Abraham learn from God's own lips that He was a holy God! Of beneficence and ability he truly heard, but not one note of that deeper chord which vibrated in the heart of God. God told him what He proposed "to do", but spake no word concerning what He truly "was". God told him of the "outflow", but did not describe the "spring" from whence the beneficent stream should flow. The part which holiness must play in purifying the world from sin was left unrevealed. That God would Himself provide a sacrifice was shadowed forth when that worthy sire, with uplifted hand, stood near to slay His son; but the weighty reason WHY God should provide that Lamb went undisclosed.

More centuries still passed away before much further revelation came. A shepherd was tending desert flocks when mysteriously a bush began to burn. The bush remaining unconsumed, the man drew himself aside to see the sight. "Take off thy shoes...the ground...is holy ground", sounds forth a voice (Exod. 3. 1-6). Here a new theme breaks forth, a theme unheard before in Holy Writ since Eden days (so far as records go). No man since Adam sinned had heard that word from God until this momentous day; but from that day and through that man this word, with an increasing range of thought, was always to the fore. The idea of holiness was set forth anew, that man might again begin to learn how high and lofty are the heights of virtue and purity which have their source before fallen men, and so, in many ways, by various means, God took such as had desire to learn into His newly-formed school.

How strange (and yet not strange) to find the lesson had not changed from those far pre-human days, when erring spirits were cast forth from the presence of the Eternal Light! Nor has it changed from Eden days when man was forced by cherub sword to quit his paradise. The holy God and the unholy participant in sin must separate from each other, must draw apart and dwell apart. But now it comes about in order to accomplish His great design that God would separate unworthy men from their unworthier kind, and fit them to become the means whereby the Holiest of all could reach right down to grasp the unworthiest of all. The lesson for the

scholar in God's school was this –"Come ye apart from them and walk with Me, and let Me make of you the channel of my Love. Come, let Me teach you the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and when you have looked into those black depths beneath then let me teach you to look up to Me, and see in Me the radiant heights of unchanging holiness".

But not for all in that far day was this far-reaching lesson set. To none but Abraham's lineal seed was the offer made. To other peoples the Holy God still dwelt in darkness and afar. Though those vile "cities of the plain" would have repented of their sin had opportunity knocked, the "Most High" passed them by. They were not of the chosen seed. Nor yet to Egypt's people came the call, for they also were outside the pale. Sin's utter darkness hid Him from their sight.

To none save Abraham's seed, and for their faithful father's sake (Deut. 7. 8, Deut. 10. 15) God sent the call to come apart and dwell with Him. God came not fully from the dark, it was too soon for that. He came into a twilight world of shadow and type. God came to meet this chosen seed to make known to them the A. B. C. of Holiness Divine. He came - shall we say - part-way to meet them, to call them to His feet, but in their turn they too must make efforts to "draw near" to the Holy One who came to dwell in Israel. This then is the great fact we have to learn, that the Most Holy God, Who perforce had separated Himself from sin, and had separated sinners from Himself, now sought to bridge the gulf between the exalted heights of Holiness and the depraved depths of sin by separating unworthy men from their unworthier kin, and helping them to learn His Laws, that thus, through his favoured Seed, the whole company of the nations might be blessed.

Separation! separation! separation!!! that and that alone is the A.B. C. of the lesson even we must learn, if we would know, and walk with Him whose voice has said, "*Be ye holy...for I am holy*".

TH

The Pamphlet—The Reality of God

The existence of God is a subject that is talked about in all places and is a question that is talked about more in the 21st century than maybe even the first century. Multi Olympic Medal winning gymnast and Strictly Come Dancing champion 2012 Louis Smith was quoted as saying, " I believe in God. I'm too scared to believe there's nothing else after death.", which indicates how even young, successful people think about the subject.

This booklet, the Reality of God was written during the 1960s, even so it is relevant today. One reader recently said it was good to hand out to those interested in this subject.

It asks questions such as;

- Does He exist or does He not ?
- Is the idea of God nothing more than a projection of the human mind ?
- Is there a super human person Being up there in the sky controlling all things or is God just an impersonal force pervading all creation ?

It talks about the world we live in being so fitted to our requirements, about the universe having a source or beginning, about different varieties of atoms, theories to explain the origin of the universe, the difference between granite and water lilies, two irrefutable factors of the presence of life and energy, and more besides.

It refers to noted people like Prof. Fred Hoyle, Albert Einstein, Sir James Jeans and Kenneth Gatland and more and concludes with the Bible, where if we judge the Bible to be by divine revelation, it ought to declare what is God's nature.

NAC

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit. Isa. 57.15

Other scriptures include;

Job 26.14	1 Tim. 1.17 & 6.16
Isa. 43.12-13	Psa. 33.6-9
Isa. 48.13	Psa. 147.4
Job 36.26	Rev. 19.6
Prov. 15.3	Psa. 139.4
Job 37.16	

Pamphlet available free and on request from mailing@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk

Child of Mine, I love thee, listen now
to me,
And make answer truly, while I
question thee.
For I see that shadows do thy soul
oppress.
And thy faith so weakens that I
cannot bless.

Thou hast craved My power and
presence in thy soul.
Wilt thou yield thee truly unto My
control?
Wilt thou let Me ever with thee have
My way-
Yield thyself in all things simply to
obey?

Tho' My presence oft-times seems to be
withdrawn-
Of my inward workings not a trace be
shown
Wilt thou count Me present, notwith-
standing all-
Still believe I'm working ever in thy
soul?

When I give to others what I thee
deny,
Flood them with My sunshine—wholly
pass thee by-
Wilt thou still believe in My strong
love for thee,
Yield thee to My purpose, whatso'er it
be?

When I to thy pleadings seem no heed
to pay,
And thy foes grow bolder—claim thee
as their prey;-
Tho' towards thee I'm silent, wilt thou
stand the test?
On My word of promise lay thee down
to rest?

If to these My questions thou can
answer "Yes,"
Thou shalt be for ever one I love the
best.
To the inner circle of My faithful few
Thou shalt be admitted, and My glory
view.

(Continued from page 10) -and they become its citizens only when they are fully cleansed from sin and every defilement. As with Ezekiel, there is the river of life, proceeding this time from the throne of God in the centre of the city, and on the banks of the river the same trees of life seen by Ezekiel, again yielding fruit for food, and "*the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations*" (ch. 22.2). Precisely the same symbolism as with the earlier prophet, and referring to the same era in prophetic time. With John there is an additional appropriateness, for just as the banishment of man from the Tree of Life marks the beginning of human history at the beginning of the first book of the Bible, so the rescinding of that prohibition comes at the climax of human history prior to the eternal state at the end of the last book of the Bible. Beyond that point sin and evil are no more, all creation

is at peace and harmony with God, and Christ is ALL in ALL, with every tongue confessing him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There remains the promise to the "overcomers" of this present Age. These, said the glorified Christ to John, are to be given "*to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*". (Rev. 2.7). Now since it is through the instrumentality of the Church, associated with her Lord in the celestial world, that He will conduct the evangelical and reconciling work of the Millennial Age, it follows that this promise is fulfilled at the completion of the Church's career upon earth i.e. at the close of this present Age. The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15 speaks of the "change" of every member of the Church, every truly dedicated and consecrated Christian of this Age, to heavenly conditions—since "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*", and the Apostle Peter in 1Thess.4.13-17 of this resurrection as taking place at the Second Advent of our Lord, also at the end of this Age. There is therefore here in Rev. 2.7 a bold metaphor of the union of all believers with God at the time they are presented "*faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude 24) on the basis of the earthly symbol of the Tree of Life. Just as the reality of essential union with God is symbolised for mankind by the literal Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden, so, we are told to infer, there is a spiritual counterpart of the Tree of Life in the celestial presence of God. Just as man will continue to all eternity in vital life-relationship to God the Father and Creator of all, so will those who "*by patient continuance in well doing*" have achieved the immortality which is the inheritance of all who have been "*buried with (Christ) by baptism into his death*", and raised "*in the likeness of his resurrection*". (Rom. 6.4-5). The one Tree was in the paradise of man, on earth; the other in the paradise of God, in heaven.

But they two are really one Tree of Life. One means of communion, one bond of union, one channel of life, between God and man. That channel is Christ. "*God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life*" (1 John. 5.11-12). It may not be too far-fetched to say that, in reality, the Lord Christ himself is the Tree of Life.

AOH

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

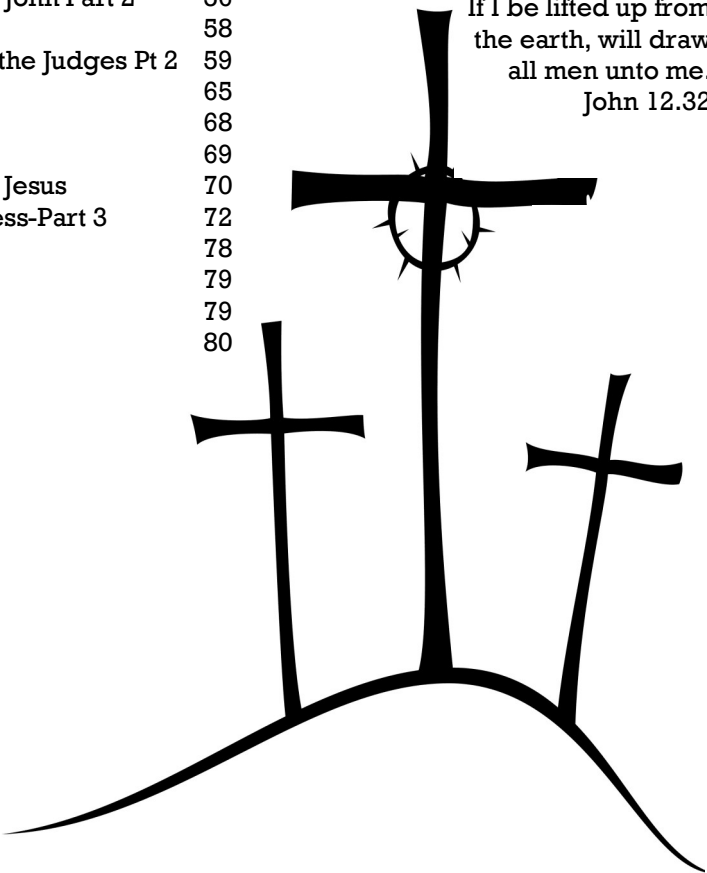
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If I be lifted up from
the earth, will draw
all men unto me.
John 12.32



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 looks for the 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)

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A SEASONAL THOUGHT

This is a special time of year. It covers the time of year from the Last Supper when the taking of the unleavened bread and wine was instituted, the death of our Lord Jesus and to the wonderful joy of his resurrection from the dead.

The cross is still a symbol that is recognized by so many. It can be seen on pop stars and in the high street shops as a fashion accessory and one can only wonder what it means to each person we observe wearing it. In this country we had the TV programme "The Bible" going out on Channel 5. It can be drawn from this that the Bible and the Christian message is still deemed to be relevant in the 21st century.

The text, "If I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" from John 12.32 (NKJV), shows that the death of Christ on the cross was necessary to bring all men to him. And in due time this will occur. His death brought about this prospect and is cause for rejoicing.

The death on the cross would be nothing without the resurrection on the third day. One can only but imagine the emotions that they had at that

time. The three women sitting at the cross one day and then on third day the women and disciples seeing Jesus again.

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“I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES...” *Job 19. 25 NKJV*

CUP OF THE LORD

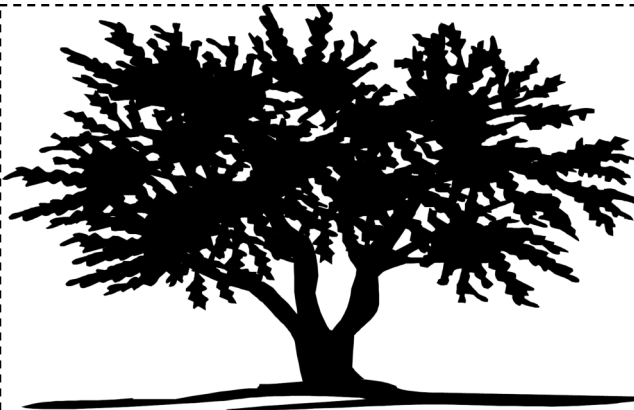
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WATCHER IN GETHSEMANE

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night
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Gone from us

Madeleine Sharp (Coventry)

THIS IS NEW

The doctrinal background to the narrative of the Last Supper.

“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer...” (Luke 22. 14-15).

It was with a deep sense of the tragic nature of this Passover feast that Jesus came with his little band of followers to this upper room. It was to be of a character quite different from any that He and they had attended before. The hour appointed for the consummation of his sacrifice had all but come, and He had come up to Jerusalem with that object in view. Furthermore, the hour of the powers of darkness had also arrived and He was to be given into their wicked hands. Heretofore none had been able to lay hands on him, as He said, “My hour is not yet come.” But now the situation was to be otherwise. Already the Prince of Darkness had made a breach into the little circle that had accompanied him to Jerusalem. Apparently disappointed in his Master, in that He had not seized the opportunity of his prophetic ride into Jerusalem to proclaim himself her king, Judas sought ways and means to force the hands of his Leader and Master. His cogitations over these ways and means laid his mind open to a suggestion from one who was watching the fast-developing situation with the most intense interest. “Why don't you betray him to the authorities,” suggested the Evil One, “so that He has to use his power to free himself and so come into the open.”

The author of the plot was his great adversary, for *“the devil . . . put into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . . to betray him...”* (John 13.2). Into the unsettled mind of the apostate Satan injected the traitorous thought, and because it was not thrown out forthwith, he also himself entered into the unhappy wretch, to take command. *“Then entered Satan into Judas . . . And he went his way and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might deliver him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.”* (Luke 22.3-5). Taking advantage then of the disaffection of one who could not understand the way of the Lord, Satan first intrudes into his mind an evil thought, then follows that with swift action by entering in himself, obsessing his victim, and taking command. At such an hour, and against such a target as the Son of God, Satan would

not entrust the work of treachery to any member of his evil staff. Fallen angelic princes might be well able to guide the destinies of nations and peoples throughout the earth (see Dan. 10. 3-20) but they were no match for this hour, and for this sinless victim. Only the mighty “Prince of the Power of the Air” was competent to seize and exploit an opportunity like this, only he, in his own person, could see it through.

Seated at the festal board, Jesus knew what had been done; *“as they did eat, he (Jesus) said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me”* (Matt. 26. 21). “Is it I Lord?” was the question that ran round the company, until even the treacherous lips took it up. *“It is he to whom I shall give a sop.”* Then when Jesus had tendered the morsel to the treacherous soul, “Satan entered into him” again (John 13.27). Even into the quiet retreat of that upper room the prince of evil had intruded himself, now to take full unbroken control of his dupe, till the victim he was seeking should be slain. That wicked act accomplished, he left Judas to exterminate himself in the flood of penitential misery that overwhelmed his soul.

After Judas had left the room, Jesus turned to Peter—Peter, the passionate, the impulsive, the ready-tongued!—to tell him that Satan wanted to get hold of him too, to shake him in the sifting-sieve, but... “for thee I have prayed”! There was no prayer for the deliberate betrayer, but there *was* a prayer, of deep solicitude, for the momentarily-overcome denier of the Lord.

Yet, freighted as this occasion was with such tragic things, the faithful Son had come to this hour with “great desire”! There was no shirking or hesitation in his attitude. He had come to this hour to be the “grain of wheat” sown into the soil of his Father's field, there to die, that men might live because of him. And so, even in this room, not the weakness of “this” or the wickedness of “that”, could rob him of his solemn desire to take with them, for the last time until the Kingdom of God should be come, the emblem appropriate to that sacred feast.

Having partaken of the foods provided in the old time-hallowed way, Jesus took a piece of bread, then, after blessing it, passed it to the company, saying as He did so, “Take, eat, this is My body, which is

broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me.” This was a counterpart, but on a higher plane, to that “eating” upon which they had all been engaged that night. He was to be the true, the real, the intended Paschal Lamb for the whole House of Israel, by means of which the Kingdom of God would come.

After that distribution He took the Cup and blessed it, and as He passed it to the little group his mind went forward to an entirely different line of thought. *“This Cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you”* (Luke 22. 20). Matthew adds another thought; *“This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins”* (Matt. 26.28).

Now, the Paschal Feast was not the occasion for the remission of sins in Israel. The feast associated with their cleansing from sin came much later in the year. The Atonement Day, with its sacrifices and its renewal of the Covenant (Heb. 9. 16-21) was connected with the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) which fell, not in the first month, but in the seventh, year by year, continually. It may seem strange to us that Jesus’ mind should run so far forward from that Paschal Feast, with its precise remembrance, to another Feast with such dis-similar associations, did we not know that in that first year of Israelitish history the deliverance from the Egyptian yoke and the inauguration of the Covenant at Mount Sinai were but the beginning and ending of their great redemption experience. The smiting of the first-born was the last blow needed to compel the Egyptians to “let My people go”. Through the Red Sea and the desert wastes to the foot of Sinai the deliverer led them on, and there, the redemption begun by his glittering sword was consummated by his trumpet voice. The “passing-over” was a means to a greater end. That “end” was the Covenant-making with its undertakings on each side. Jehovah consented to be their God; they consented to be his people.

But, in after years, that Covenant needed to be purified by blood, and be renewed year by year on their Atonement day (Heb. 9. 18-21). Jesus’ words over the Cup are in full keeping with this thought, though on a higher plane. He wanted to teach his loved ones a deep truth in this matter of the Cup.

It was not the custom in Israel for the Covenant blood to be drunk by any one. It was always used for sprinkling: some of it, by the Priest in the Most Holy Place as a covering for sin; and some of it by the Mediator, later in the day, at the rededication service of the people as they renewed their Covenant with their God (Num. 29. 7-11). When, in due time, Jesus' blood comes to be used as the blood of the New Covenant it will not be drunk. It will be sprinkled or presented by himself as the great High Priest in the anti-typical Most Holy Place, on behalf of those whom God has invited to make a New Covenant with him (Jer. 31.31; Heb. 8. 8-12), in place of that old Covenant which failed through the weakness of the flesh—that is, with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. The blood of the New Covenant is intended for Israel's cleansing and for ratifying her New Covenant, even though shed so long ago. But until then it is accounted to flow in those who have drunk at that Cup throughout, and will remain in them until in the Age to come it is efficacious for Israel's cleansing, when, after their banishment and subsequent regathering to this land, they will have become ready to covenant a New Covenant with their God.

Looking back to that historic night in Egypt we can see that Heaven's last visitation affected one member of each household in a manner altogether different from the rest. Though in a way, all the household were under the blood, only the firstborn was in danger of the firstborn's fate. Had there been no blood on the lintel of that house, the destroying sword would have entered within, and the fate that was to befall the Egyptian would have befallen the firstborn of Israel too. The life of the slain lamb was the price required for the sparing of the firstborn's life; and yet, though thus preserved from the agonies of death, that very passing-over separated him away from his family unto the Lord. Spared thus from being cut-off from his family, yet in that night, he was truly separated from the old family home-life to belong exclusively to the Lord.

In later days, Moses reminded Israel that God had said “*all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast; mine they shall be; I am the LORD*” (Num. 3. 13). The record of this demand is first set out in Exo. 13.2—a demand made on “*the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their*

armies” (Exo. 12. 51). Here then, during that fateful night, God separated out a first fruits of the nation to be his own possession, many days before He brought the remainder unto himself at Sinai. Though in the meantime between Egypt and Sinai all the nation’s firstborns were exchanged for all the males of Levi (see Num. 3. 11-13), yet the principle of separation remained the same, and when the whole community of the nation came to the holy mount, Levi was separated (in the firstborn’s stead) unto the Lord to be a special channel of the Lord (as a firstborn, Exo. 4.22), out of all the peoples of the earth, had had its own firstborn (or a tribe in lieu thereof) separated out from its own ranks, so that through its services their nation’s standing and Covenant might be renewed from year to year.

This is exactly in accord with the principle involved in the words of the Lord to his disciples in the upper room. His mind had gone far forward to the establishment of the Covenant conditions between his Father and the regathered hosts of Israel, and to the part therein that He himself must play. But that much-to-be-desired event lay far ahead on the stream of time. It was as if some far-sighted son of Israel could have looked forward to Sinai from some point of the night when the Passover feast was in progress, in his Egyptian hut, and could have said to the firstborn of the family that there was something specially important for him in this night’s happenings, with regard to the Covenant that then lay so many days ahead.

Jesus was talking to the first nucleus of the firstborn class of this Gospel Age. Others have entered into this same privilege (and though of Gentile birth, yet, by faith have gained joint-inheritance in Abraham’s seed) and may drink from the Paschal Cup as did those first members of the class. It is still the blood of the New Covenant which they drink; of the Millennial Covenant, but till that time is come it is to be taken as the bond of union between him, whose blood it was and those in whose bodies it, by drinking, has come to be.

Let no one stumble at this conclusion or this privilege, nor interweave or jumble other lines of truth into this. It is our heritage in the truth to separate out things that differ, and see things each in its own light. Jesus’ words stand out sharp and clear. First, there is the breaking of the bread in true Paschal form—and Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, is the One on whom

we feed during the darkness of this long Gospel night (1 Cor. 5. 7). And secondly, there is the drinking of the life-blood of the Covenant of the future Day, to be in us the bond that ties us to our Lord in that great work, till the death He has died has claimed us too (Rom. 6. 3-5). Concerning these two things the words of Jesus are clear and precise: each line of thought is definite and well emphasised, and thereby He invites us not only to share together the broken loaf of his sinless body, but also to take and hold within ourselves the precious blood—more precious than all the world’s finest gold—until He asks us to yield it up again so that therewith He may accomplish his Covenant purposes. The flight of time brings nearer, with every passing year, that auspicious event: but even so, not yet is the long Passover night at an end. The great antitypical visitation of the last of the ten plagues upon the oppressors of his Israel people still lies ahead of us. Till the great deliverance is brought to pass it is still appropriate to take the broken bread and drink the out-poured blood, knowing, the while, that the great consummation is fully assured by his death.

Once more, by the grace of God, it will be our privilege to gather at the table of the Lord, and take again the tokens of his great sacrifice. Let all who see this occasion to be a privilege—a sacred solemn feast before the Lord—look well to themselves that they eat and drink not unworthily.

AOH

BEFORE YOU

“Before you” he trod all the path of woe,
He took the sharp thrusts with his head bent low,
He knew deepest sorrow and pain and grief,
He knew long endurance without relief.

He took all the bitter from death’s deep cup,
He kept not a blood drop, but gave all up.
“Before you,” and for you, he won the fight
To bring you to glory and realms of light.

Songs of the Nightingale

RED

There are three primary colours which make up white light, namely blue, yellow (gold) and red. Red is the colour of blood. There is that about it which grips attention. Men use it with startling effect—the red flag, the red hand, the red cross, and the red light. Its bright warm colour includes scarlet, vermillion and crimson, and it forms that part of the spectrum farthest removed from the violet.

The Bible uses the colour very expressively. It relates to blood all the time. Thereby it depicts human history and truly that history is “written in blood.” History most pathetic! instead of peace and harmony ruling in the hearts of men, there has been strife and discord. Men have resembled wolves and tigers; fear, suspicion and distrust, has over-ridden confidence and love.

The history of the human race began in Eden. God created Adam in his own sublime mental image, and Adam was perfect. There was nothing to mar his tranquillity and happiness, and this became very exquisite when Eve was added to him in fellowship. Then came the test of obedience. It is not for us to question God’s wisdom in giving such a test. Nay, in spite of the tragedy which followed, we may see a depth of wisdom surpassing human intelligence. Was not Adam good because he was made so ? Is it not far better to be good from voluntary choice ? In this way we are able to enter into the Divine aspect of matters.

The penalty for disobedience was death, “*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men*” (Rom. 5. 12). All the human race have come under that penalty, and there is no escape except as God makes provision. We must, however, be wise and think of death *as death*, and not as life in some other realm, otherwise the Bible must go, and our viewpoints become entangled and confused. We are aware that many creeds are designed to teach the contrary; that “the dead are more alive than ever they were.” This is entering into the Devil’s lie, presented at the beginning, “*ye shall not surely die*” (Gen. 3. 4). “How about the soul ?” query some. Hear the Creator’s own words relative to this matter, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18. 4), “Thou turnest man to destruction...they are as a sleep” (Psalm 90. 3,5).

God used quite simple means of enforcing the death penalty. He turned Adam and Eve out of their home-garden, wherein grew their natural food, which precisely met the needs of their physical organisms. After this they gradually lost tone and vigour until the penalty was fulfilled. Instead of forever, Adam lived 930 years (Gen. 3. 22-23, Gen. 5. 5). Men have been on the downhill ever since. Their likeness to their Creator has become increasingly blurred. "Man's inhumanity to man has *indeed* made countless thousands mourn," so that few are able to live out their allotted span. Jealousy and enmity showed itself quite early. Yea the very firstborn of Adam became infected by the awful virus of murderous hatred. Cain had become morose, taciturn and fretful. His brother on the other hand was turning his face more and more toward his Maker, in hope of His mercy. God's definite acceptance of Abel's offering and His rejection of Cain's, was too much for the latter. He was furious, "Who was Abel to come before me?" Such meditations resulted in fratricide—the murder of a brother.

Since then there have been "Cains" without number, likewise those who have resembled Abel. Besides this, men have fought one another as though God did not exist. When they became aggrieved, instead of coming together, as human beings should, to talk over matters and thus demonstrate that they are neither jealous or avaricious, they have trained their kith and kin to use weapons of slaughter, and the resultant battles and victories have demonstrated who was "right in their own eyes". Human life has been the cheapest thing in the world, notwithstanding the fact that within the home circles, there have been desperate and aching hearts, souls full of anguish and tears.

Let us however be charitable to one and all! Are we not all victims of the fall in Adam? We cannot, dare not—whatever our training—boast ourselves over others! Rather we should turn our hearts to our God, our Guide, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let us remember that it is nothing to Him to shape human destinies and nations, His power is infinite. His love is boundless to those who trust Him. It is the lack of reverence, due to Him, that brings disaster upon disaster. Howbeit, humanity is helpless until the Almighty comes to their aid. This, He has promised so to do—He "shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more...for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken” (Micah 4. 3-4).

There are two aspects relative to blood presented to us in the Scriptures. Firstly the blood of sinners and secondly the blood of the innocent.

Again let us picture Adam and Eve after their fall. They had suddenly become fearful and strangely self-conscious, and they began to clothe themselves with leaves, the product of nature’s garden. They felt their need of a mantle, though they knew not what. The Lord knew also they now needed a covering in a deeper sense than our parents realized at the time, hence He provided an apparel which meant the slaughter of two innocent animals. Graphically we read that the Lord made “coats of skins and clothed them” (Gen. 3.21). Thus at the very beginning the message comes ringing down through the age that “without the shedding of blood is no remission” of sins (Heb. 9. 22).

Relative to Cain and Abel, we remember that Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, and Cain, a product of the vegetable kingdom. How deeply significant the words “the LORD had respect unto Abel and his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect” (Gen. 4. 4-5).

After the flood Noah built an altar and offered thereon certain animal sacrifices and this was accepted by God as “a sweet savour.” It was pleasant because the Lord knew of its hidden meaning (Gen. 8. 20-21).

In due course Abraham came on the scenes, to whom that marvellous promise was given “in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Abraham fulfilled many types or pictures during his career, the most important of which was the offering of his son Isaac upon the altar of sacrifice. Isaac was his father’s delightful companion. Here was a proof-test of the most searching order. The faith of Abraham triumphed, one moment more and Isaac would have died. Hitherto animal sacrifices were picturing some great event in the mind of God. Here was a human sacrifice, a son, whom his father dearly loved! God demonstrated his

exultant pleasure in words that are wonderful to read, and which He confirmed with an oath. The Apostle writing over two thousand years afterwards, declared that those two immutable things—God’s word and His oath—ensured to the Lord’s faithful people a positiveness that can never be annulled (Gen. 22; Heb. 6. 13-17).

We ask why are the chosen, so keenly interested in the promise made to Abraham ? The answer is because they long for, hope for and pray for, that time when every human being will be supremely happy. When disease and death will be rolled away like some big black cloud, revealing the “Sun of Righteousness” shining in its strength (Mal. 4: 2).

Why was God so intensely interested in Abraham’s faith and willingness, and Isaac’s submission and obedience ? The answer reveals that within the heart of the Almighty is a deep sweet well of love and mercy. The picture foreshadowed His own stupendous sacrifice and His Son’s willingness even unto death. Interesting to relate, even the resurrection was shadowed by Abraham receiving his son back again (Heb. 11. 17-19). In the light of this, how luminous becomes John 3. 16-17. *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”* (John 3. 16-17). Thus the great sin-bearer is brought to view. One who would die for His brother Adam and all in him so that Divine Justice may be fully satisfied. Thus the precious blood of Jesus Christ betokens salvation to all who believe.

During that last plague of Egypt, the destruction of the “firstborns”, we read that the angel of death passed over each house whereon was sprinkled the blood of a lamb. Unlike the Hebrews, the Egyptians had no such faith, hence there was not a house belonging to them where there was not one dead. (Exo.12). This pictured the passing over of the “church of the firstborn,” since the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Heb.12. 22-23). They have been saved by His grace having been privileged to look unto “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the whole world” (John 1. 29).

We recall that Rahab demonstrated her faith in the God of the Hebrews, by fixing a scarlet cord in her window. Eventually she and all within her

house were saved from the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 6. 22-25). This likewise foreshadowed the saving virtue of the ransom sacrifice.

Over the Tabernacle, which was erected in the wilderness, was a covering of ram skins dyed red (Exo. 25. 5). This illustrated that the Christian is covered by the merit of the atoning sacrifice: shown not only in the sacrifice of rams, but also by the colour of the dye. To come from under the blood, and to count the precious sacrifice of Jesus of no value spells immediate disaster and destruction of any who have once been enlightened by the holy spirit (Heb. 10. 26-29).

God's chosen have been compared to a chaste virgin, sincere and pure in heart, loving, merciful and tender; at the same time valiant for truth and righteousness. The office of Jesus Christ is to perfect his Bride. O miracles of miracles! From the dust-heap of humanity they are eventually made meet for the palatial dwelling of the majestic King of the universe—*"The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought into the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee"* (Psalm 45. 13-14).

Contrast this sublime picture with that mentioned in Revelation 17. There is depicted another woman in scarlet apparel. She is the Devil's handiwork, not God's, a veritable mother of harlots. Her apparel is *red*, not by reason of the covering merit of the blood of Christ, but by the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Think of it millions done to death in the name of Christ. Undoubtedly false doctrines have been largely responsible. Satan turns himself, at will, into an angel of light and thus he works upon his ministers. (2 Cor. 11. 13-15). What devilish ingenuity to interweave around the precious doctrine of the atonement, the teaching of eternal torture for those who are unable to fulfil God's requirements during an age when the very atmosphere surrounding everything is evil and treacherous! Erroneous doctrines commenced with the early church. The apostle Paul observed the sectarian spirit as indicated by the words "I am of Paul! I am of Apollos!" (1 Cor. 1. 10-13). He was however destined to see worse things—"The mystery of iniquity doth already work" he wrote on one occasion. (2 Thes. 2. 7). This worked until the counterfeit kingdom of Christ arose before the eyes of men. Woe unto those who would thwart

her schemes for temporal honour, power and glory! What a travesty? What a departure from the sublime original purity and simplicity as founded by our Lord and His apostles (2 Cor. 11. 1-3). We are thankful that God knew all things from the beginning. Every testing, proving and chastening of the Sons of Light have been supervised and overruled for the highest good of each member of the Body of Christ. Praise Ye the Lord!

FL

SPLINTERS FROM HIS CROSS

Little headaches, little heartaches,
Little griefs of every day,
Little trials and vexations,
How they throng around our way.

One great cross, immense and heavy,
So it seems to our weak wills,
Might be borne with resignation,
But these many small ones kill.

Yet all life is found of small things,
Little leaves make up the trees,
Many tiny drops of water,
Blending, make the mighty seas.

So these many little burdens
Pressing on our hearts so hard,
All uniting, form a life's work
Meriting a grand reward.

Let us not, then, by impatience,
Mar the beauty of the whole,
But for love of Jesus bear all
To the silence of the soul.

Asking him for grace sufficient
To sustain through each loss,
And to treasure each small offering
As a splinter from his cross.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN—PART 2

“I wrote unto the Church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” (v. 9-10)

This Diotrephes is one of the six men named in the New Testament as opponents of the true faith. They were all professing brethren, not men like Demas who openly forsook Paul and the faith “having loved this present world”. These six, Hymeneus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Phygellus, Philetus and Diotrephes had adopted various courses of opposition to the Apostles and their work and had in consequence become menaces to the settled and orderly progress of the Church. It is not said of Diotrephes, as it is said of the others, that he was guilty of doctrinal lapses or that he was a teacher of error. But the Apostle’s condemnation is none the less forthright and definite. This man, who evidently occupied the leading position in the Church, the “Bishop” or elder as we would say, was exercising the powers of his office in a thoroughly improper manner. He had even gone so far as to disown the Apostle himself and prevent the reading of his letters before the assembled Church. He was not interested in the wider preaching of the Gospel and sought to hinder the free communion between brethren from elsewhere who came thus preaching, and the members of his own Church. He was, in fact, busily engaged in forming an exclusive little religious club presided over by himself with all outsiders barred. We have all seen the same thing in our own time; the spirit of Diotrephes is still amongst us and the pity of it and the shame of it never grows less. All too often “my people love to have it so” and then there is not much that can be done about it. John held a certain Apostolic authority which he did not hesitate to invoke on this occasion. Although in his epistles he normally shows little inclination to appeal to his own Apostleship and prefers to appeal and exhort, allowing his gospel of love and light to penetrate the hearts of his “children” and do its work there in its own way, he can certainly be sharp at times and this was one such time. Diotrephes and his ways he would not tolerate, and one can well conclude that if John ever did carry out his expressed intention of visiting

the church referred to in this letter, then Diotrephes received very short shrift at the hands of the father of all the churches.

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.” (v. 11-12)

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that in these two verses John is addressing the Church through Gaius. It seems so unnecessary and even inappropriate in view of John’s earlier words of commendation to Gaius to think that he is now counselling him to avoid evil and embrace good. He was doing that already. But taking these verses in conjunction with those immediately preceding in reference to Diotrephes one can detect a tone of reproof to the church for permitting this sorry state of affairs. If Diotrephes was an improper person to have the oversight of the little company, it was not because they had no one else. “Demetrius hath good report of all men.” John could hardly go further than this in recommending Demetrius to the notice of the Church—surely here was the man who ought to be their elder. Well reported of by all who know him—a good report concerning the Truth—the endorsement of the Apostle himself. What more could they want? Perhaps the church did eventually take the hint and replace Diotrephes by Demetrius, to their own spiritual good and advancement. We do not know, but it is nice to think that perhaps they did.

“I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.” (v. 13-14)

A very similar conclusion to that of the Second Epistle. Just the kind of conclusion we should expect. So much to say and discuss and the written word so unsatisfactory a medium by which to say it. So much better to defer it until they could meet and then spiritual communion would be free and unchecked. So the friends with John at Ephesus send greetings to their brethren with Gaius in the unnamed church, and in so doing express once more that spirit of understanding brotherly love which is the cohesive

force holding together all who are Christ's. "The love of Christ constraineth us"—holds us together.

John's work is done. He has given of his best, spending himself in wise instruction, grave warning and loving exhortation. It is for us to take great heed of his words and apply them very seriously to our own hearts and lives. This man lived a long and crowded life in the service of his Lord and ours. He knew—none better—how the practice of the principles of Jesus' teaching, rightly combined with a proper perception of the doctrinal understanding of Scripture can make the Christian life full and complete, giving every happiness and satisfaction now, furthering the interests of the Gospel in this world, and in the after life beyond the veil, bring joy unspeakable and full of glory. "We know not what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

AOH

HYSSOP

There are many plants called hyssop. After much discussion, it is now thought to be *origanum maru*, which is also known as the Syrian or white marjoram, which would have been indigenous to the promised land and its environs. They are fragrant, wiry plants, up to three feet in height, but much less when growing, as they often do, in rocky crevices or poor soil. Solomon bears this out when he said of hyssop that springs out of walls (1 Kings 4.33). Their branches and leaves are hairy and the flowers are white. As they are hairy they hold water well. This is why they were used as sprinklers in religious ceremonies. Moses directed that the 'hyssop' be used to sprinkle the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts of the Hebrew homes in Egypt. (Exo. 12.22).



Hyssop

Also it was used to cleanse the lepers as in Leviticus 14. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow". Psalm 51.7.

Hyssop also appears in John 19. 29 "a jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth" (ESV). According to botanists and John Chancellor, this would have been a reed as *origanum maru* would have been too small.

SAMUEL, GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

2. Manhood

Ten years had passed since that memorable night when the Lord spoke to Samuel out of the sanctuary. Now he was grown to manhood, and already “all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD” (1 Sam. 3. 20). The judgment pronounced ten years previously had not been executed: Eli, an old man of ninety-eight, was still High Priest. His profligate sons, middle-aged themselves, were still apostate from their high mission, and Israel still worshipped false gods. It was not that the true God was quite unknown; all the evidence is that there was always a substantial minority which served God and “sighed and cried for the abominations” that were done in Israel. But in the main the nation was godless. The Tabernacle, made by Bezaleel in the wilderness, still stood at Shiloh and the ceremonies and feasts were still celebrated in a more or less perfunctory manner, but quite evidently the moral state of the nation was thoroughly bad. It was upon this unpromising material that the youthful reformer set to work, and with such vigour that his name and fame speedily became renowned throughout the land. The first sentence of chapter 4, belonging really to the end of chapter 3, tells us that “the word of Samuel came to all Israel”. That does not demand that the people heeded Samuel to any extent: the next series of events in their national history, involving one of the greatest disasters they ever suffered, the capture of the Ark of the Covenant in open battle, is evidence that they did not; but the expression itself is sufficient to indicate that the young man was already in process of making himself a force to be reckoned with in Israel.

It was during this period that, as chapter 3, verse 21, tells us, “the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD”. The expression “the Lord appeared *again* in Shiloh” implies that for a long time previously his presence had not been manifest there. If one reads the stories of Israel’s national life during the latter part of the period of the Judges there can be little wonder at that. The sad refrain “*In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” intones its sorrowful message throughout those dark days after Joshua had died, and the Judges ruled, uneasily, one after another, with troubled times of

anarchy in between. The Tabernacle had been standing at Shiloh from very early days. When they crossed Jordan and entered the land it had at first been erected at Gilgal, quite near Jordan, but before many years had passed a more suitable site was sought and found at Shiloh, in almost the exact centre of the promised land. Obviously Shiloh became the spiritual capital of the country—for Jerusalem was still the stronghold of the Jebusites and not in the possession of Israel at all—and it was to Shiloh that men looked for religious and political leadership. The High Priest, in the days when there were no kings, and the Judges rose, ruled, and passed away at frequent intervals, rarely exercising authority over more than a portion of the land at a time, was the most important because he was the only permanent figure in the national life, and the High Priest therefore had immense possibilities for good or for ill according to his administration of his sacred office. And for many years now, that office had fallen into disrepute and the nation was suffering accordingly.

What lesson is there in this for us? Is it not that strong spiritual leadership is essential for the community that would make progress in the things of God? Democracy is the cry of the day, but democracy is only good for those who are fit to govern themselves, and that is not true of mankind today. Hence the world, in which the masses are claiming and gaining more and more power, is becoming steadily more ill-governed and anarchistic. That was the condition of Israel under the Judges. And this is true to a great extent in the Church also. There are aspects of our communal Christian life together where democratic methods are out of place because the company of believers, for all their zeal and enthusiasm and loyalty to their Lord, are not yet at that stage of Christian maturity where they can fitly order their own course. Therefore God, in his wisdom, does provide pastors, teachers, “fathers in God”, for the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4. 12). It is when such men are affording wise and clear-sighted leadership that the Church prospers; when their vision is fading, or their devotion to their calling is slackening, the people perish. We, no less than Israel, need the wisdom and reforming zeal of a Samuel if the conquests of Joshua are to be retained and maintained; conversely, if the elders of the assembly or the community have eyes that are waxed dim, as were those of Eli, if their faith and zeal has left them, if they have no longer the passionate devotion to the cause of Divine Truth that

characterised their earlier years, then there is most surely cause for deep concern as to the spiritual health of the flock.

Samuel would be about twenty-five years of age when the Battle of Aphek took place and the Ark of the Covenant was captured. His own efforts to turn Israel to the God of Israel, to induce them to forsake their false gods and to renew their covenant with him, could not as yet have borne much fruit. He had become known as a prophet and men were conscious that God was speaking through him; but Israel was notoriously indifferent to the messages of its prophets, and whilst the nation could go on its way without meeting utter disaster they were disposed to enjoy the good things of life they had and take little real notice of the young enthusiast among them. But the sands were running out. The Philistines, who had been off and on the oppressors of Israel for two or three centuries past, were gathering their forces for a fresh attempt to bring them into bondage. Had the nation been true to its Covenant with God there had been nothing to fear. Had it even shown signs of repentance and a desire to come back to its holy calling, God would have delivered; but there was no such trend. Despite their half-grudging admission that God was speaking again in Israel at the mouth of Samuel they were still at heart apostate as ever, and the depth of their irreligiousness was shown up when, in consequence of their defeat at the first encounter with the enemy, they determined to take the Ark of God into the battle with them, *“It”* said they *“may save us out of the hand of our enemies”* (Chapter 4. 3).

This was the most fearful act of sacrilege ever committed by the people of Israel in their history. They were relying on the belief that God, thus put to the test, would not allow the sacred symbol of his presence to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised heathen. What He would not do for his people He would do for his holy habitation. They would compel God to save them, even against his will. That was probably their line of reasoning, and it shows the depth of ignorance into which they had fallen. This was no repetition of those ancient days when the priests, bearing aloft the holy Ark on their shoulders, set forward with the consecrated people in their wake, and the fervent cry arose on the still air *“Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; let them that hate thee flee before thee”*. It might be that the age-old shout was heard again as the army marched toward the Philistine host with the sacred object in its midst, but the triumphant song

must have been quickly changed to cries of dismay and terror as it speedily became evident that God was not going to intervene, and that the defeat of the previous day was nothing to the disaster that was now to overwhelm them. And to the weak, apathetic old High Priest, without whose permission the Ark could not have been removed from its sanctuary, came the terrible news that the revered symbol was in the hands of the alien, the Tabernacle shorn of its glory, the nation of its centre of worship. It was a tragic ending to a life that could have been mighty in God's service—for Eli had ruled Israel for forty years.

Samuel would have been no party to this, but he would have had no power to prevent it. The part he had to play was yet to come. For the next twenty years the land lay under the harsh rule of the Philistines, and the nation mourned, desolate. Evidently the Philistines had followed up their capture of the Ark by razing Shiloh to the ground, for the name drops out of history thereafter, except for one solitary mention as the place of an obscure prophet in the reign of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14. 2). The fate of the little settlement is described graphically in Jer. 7 and in Psa. 78. The High Priest—dead. His son and successor—dead. The priesthood—scattered. The Ark—gone. The Tabernacle—destroyed or hidden away for safety. The nation—subject to a cruel enemy. That was the condition when Samuel entered upon his life's work.

The death of Eli obviously left Samuel in the position of leadership. During the twenty years that the Ark, restored by the Philistines after the series of plagues it had brought them, abode at Kirjathjearim (1 Sam. 7. 2) the young prophet sought diligently to turn the hearts of the people back to God. His message was an exhortation to repentance, but it also held practical promise. *"If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts"* he cried, *"then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines"* (1 Sam. 7. 3). His message was definite and without compromise, but it held hope.

And Israel turned! The example and preaching of the one who loved and served them so faithfully, because he loved and served God most of all, brought the nation back to God. *"Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only"*. At forty-five years of age Samuel found himself at the head of a repentant and pious people.

What a lesson for us in these times of discouragement and faint-heartedness when we think all is lost! What an incentive to consistent and persistent witness, both within our fellowship, and outside it to the world! The apathetic Eli, without doubt a good man in his earlier days, had been the cause of national ruin and the loss of the nation's greatest treasure. Weakness of faith, dimness of vision, had palsied his hands and leadened his feet so that he no longer inspired and led the nation, and the people drifted from belief to open rebellion. So the wrath of God was visited upon them. There could have been no other sequel. Now Samuel, in faith and zeal and by dint of ceaseless endeavour, had restored the people to their rightful position before God, and God, as ever in such circumstances, waited, ready to bless.

The occasion was not long in coming. Samuel, sensing, as did Daniel in a much later day, that the time was ripe for God to intervene to honour his people's faith, summoned a great assembly at Mizpeh. There he said, "*I will pray for you to the Lord*". Can we not imagine how his heart must have beat fast in looking upon that confident host, so different from the fear-stricken armies that twenty years before had borne the sacred Ark into battle to their own destruction. Here was a people for whom the Lord could indeed fight, an army that trusted not in carnal weapons, not in the strength of its own power, but the superabundant power of Almighty God. And as the children of Israel publicly acknowledged their fault and repudiated the past, saying "*we have sinned against the Lord*", God drew near to act.

The Philistines, being made aware of this great gathering at Mizpeh, and fearing insurrection, gathered their forces and came up to quell the rebellion. There was fear in Israel, but there was also trust. "*Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us*" they cried to Samuel "*that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines*". That was a significant phrase. "*The Lord our God*". There was no fetish-worship of an inanimate object this time, no appeal even that Samuel pray to *his* God. "*This is our God*" was their instinctive thought. "*He will save us*". That speaks volumes for the untiring work of Samuel during those twenty years that had elapsed since the disastrous Battle of Aphek.

So God saved! He thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and, wonder of wonders, utterly discomfited them, discomfited them so

completely that they troubled Israel no more all the days of Samuel's judgeship. The deliverance that was wrought that day is comparable with the destruction of Sennacherib's host in the days of Hezekiah and of the Moabites in the days of Jehoshaphat. These are three memorable occasions on which God delivered in response to the prayer of faith without his people needing to strike a blow—although they did on this occasion pursue the defeated enemy and complete the work of destruction after God had given the victory.

But it was God that saved!

Thus did the last and the greatest of the Judges become firmly established in the seat of power. He was leader by common consent, and Israel willingly accepted his rule. At Mizpeh, and Gilgal, and Bethel, each in turn, year by year, he dispensed justice and ordered the everyday affairs of the people. At Ramah, his home, he guided the nation's destinies and gave Israel perhaps the only period of real peace it had known in all the troubled years that had followed the entry into Canaan. Israel, that forgetful people, never forgot Samuel. His greatness in rulership and in the dispensing of justice passed into a proverb, so that years later the Lord could say to Jeremiah the prophet *"Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight"* (Jer.15. 1). The little lad who had been given to God in the sanctuary at Shiloh had grown to be classed with Moses, the greatest man of all time in Israel's history.

And in the Temple services, throughout Israel's generations, the sweet singers of Israel chanted *"Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them"* (Psa. 99. 6). Thus did Israel praise her most famous Judge.

AOH

John 12:13 They...took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.



HOSANNA

Mark 11:1-11 is the record of Jesus coming to Jerusalem as King. It says, "As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany., Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly'". They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway...When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. **Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' 'Hosanna in the highest'** Jesus entered Jerusalem..."(NIV)

Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem had been prophesied by Zechariah, where it is written, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zech. 9.9 NIV)

What is Hosanna ? The word hosanna (Latin osanna, Greek ὡσαννά, hōsanná) is from Hebrew הוֹשִׁיעָה-נָּא, הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא hōšā'-nā', which is short for hōšî'â-nā' from Aramaic הוֹשַׁע נָּא meaning "save, rescue" (possibly "saviour"). It is used six times in the New Testament and once in the Old Testament. In Strong's it is number 5614 (Greek concordance).

The New Testament ones are in Matthew 21.9, Matthew 21.15, Mark 11.9, Mark 11.10 as above and John 12.13 These are all the accounts of the same event as in Mark chapter 11. The Old Testament reference comes from Psalm 118.25 "LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!"

Let us go back to the situation now. When Jesus enters into Jerusalem, the Israelites acknowledged him as their king as per their custom, as we read, "many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off

the trees, and spread them in the way” And also we read “they cried Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the Highest”.

The word “Hosanna” was an exclamation of adoration and, literally translated, means ‘Save now!’ They strongly believed their Jesus would save them and would restore his father David’s throne by eliminating Roman rule in Israel.

But, how did Jesus respond to this call of Hosanna from the Israelites? And how did Jesus react to their reception and acknowledgment as King of Israel?

It can be assumed that if it had not been Jesus on horseback, but a normal human being then, he would have been tempted, have been excited and rebelled against the Romans. But our Saviour knew his mission very well that saving Israelites was not the will of God at that time. He could have delivered all the Israelites from the Romans like his forefather David. But Jesus was not tempted or excited about the Israelites’ acknowledgment of him as a king of Israel. Instead, he obeyed the will of our Lord God and allowed himself to be put on the cross so that Adam and his entire race might have an opportunity to be restored in his coming kingdom, in due time.

This is the lesson we can learn from our saviour’s behaviour. As his disciples, we also need to put ourselves under God’s will, before all the worldly things, such as pride and power.

God’s will. Jesus tells us that, “whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35) Paul says in relation to slaves to “Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.” (Eph. 6:6) John tells us in 1 John 2:17 that “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives for ever.” Peter says “that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Pet. 4:2 KJV)

Since Hosanna means “Save” 1 Thess. 5:18 “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Hebrews 10:36 “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”.

1 Peter 2:15 “For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”

Although the cry ‘Hosanna’ was not answered at the time of Jesus’ first advent, God has not forgotten the groaning of the human family. In Hag-gai 2.7-9, God says “I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all na-tions will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD Almighty. “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the LORD Almighty. “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,” says the LORD Almighty. “And in this place I will grant peace,” declares the LORD Almighty.”

The Lord God saved the whole of humanity through his son in his first advent by his sacrifice. Even Jesus prayed to our Lord God to save him. We can read in Hebrews 5.7 (NIV) “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission”. We are all saved by this mercy as “he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spir-it” (Titus 3.5 NIV).

We will be saved...

Romans 5.9 (NIV) “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

Even during the end of time... we will also be saved “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth”. (Revelation 3:10)

In conclusion the word Hosanna teaches one thing. Let us not be tempted by the world but put ourselves under the will of our Lord God Jehovah like our Saviour Jesus did, when they shouted Hosanna. Let’s believe we are all saved by our Lord God Jehovah through Jesus Christ, and also will be saved ... at the end of days.

RP

LOT'S DAUGHTERS

The incident, related in Gen. 19. 30-38, whereby the two daughters of Lot became the mothers of children by their own father has been used by many a commentator and in many a homily to illustrate the depravity and corruption of that far-off day but the strictures all too often do not take into account vital differences between that day and ours. The standards and conventions of four thousand years ago were not as those of today and some of the reasons that similar conduct is now rightly regarded as reprehensible did not then apply.

The story is set in the shadow of the catastrophic overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. The patriarch Lot, with his two young daughters, had been saved from the holocaust and taken refuge in a cave on the high mountain which stands at the south-east corner of the Dead Sea. From their refuge, five thousand feet above the plain, they could see the devastated area below them and realised that all life had been obliterated. They had at first found shelter in the little town of Zoar some sixteen miles from Sodom but, the record tells us, they “feared to dwell in Zoar”, perhaps because the Canaanite inhabitants were not too friendly or perhaps they feared that Zoar in its turn would be involved and destroyed; the conflagration probably went on for weeks and spread over a wide area. So they were eking out a sparse and primitive existence on this uninhabited mountain-top. It was here that the two girls, despairing of finding husbands, resorted to this desperate expedient in order to ensure posterity to their father. *“Our father is old”* said one to the other *“and there is not a man in the earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth”*, This need not necessarily mean that they thought all human life had been destroyed from the earth; the word for “earth” here can be limited in its meaning to the land around them and from their elevated position they could see some seventy miles to the horizon which would take in much of the land of Canaan where Abraham dwelt; they would perceive that the highlands of Judah were still green and fertile. More likely they saw no avenue of escape from their mountain fastness across the desolated plain below and felt that they were permanently cut off from the rest of the world.

The daughters justified their action by necessity, but the entire episode is better understood when it is remembered that at that early stage in the

history of the race, marriage was customary within much closer relationships than is considered either ethically or biologically sound now. The progressive physical degeneration which has continued from the beginning had not sapped human vitality to the extent it has now. Men and women lived longer and were more virile. In Old Testament history we find that Abraham and Nahor his brother both married their nieces; nearly a thousand years later a possible marriage between David's son Amnon and his half-sister Tamar was considered quite proper (2 Sam. 13. 13) although this was in fact forbidden by the Mosaic Law. Another and earlier Tamar saw nothing improper in bearing a child to her father-in-law Judah in order to maintain the family line (Gen. 38). Outside Old Testament records, it was a frequent occurrence for kings of nations to marry their own sisters with the object of keeping the line of descent in one family. Every one of the eleven Pharaohs of the famous Egyptian 18th dynasty, under some of whom the Oppression and Exodus of Israel took place, took their own sisters, daughters or half-sisters to wife, one even marrying two of his own daughters. Abhorrent as the idea might be to modern minds, therefore, it has to be admitted that Lot's daughters were not so far removed from the general thought of their times and the solution they found to their problem should be viewed accordingly.

The two children became ancestors of nations which multiplied to inhabit the territory east of the Dead Sea, the Moabites and the Ammonites. Both nations were thorns in the side of Israel in after days. One noteworthy fact is that Ruth, an ancestress of Christ, was a Moabitess. Had it not been for the action taken by the two daughters in that cave on the Canaanitish mountain above the ruined cities, one of the most appealing characters in the whole of Bible history would not have lived, and the Book of Ruth would never have been written.

AOH

STAINED GLASS SAINTS

A child, on being asked, "What is a saint?"
could recall only the stained glass windows of his parish church.
His reply was: "A saint is a person that the light shines through."
How true!

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

BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS

Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand-
The shadow of a mighty rock,
Within a weary land:
A home within the wilderness,
A rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat,
And the burden of the day.

O safe and happy shelter,
O refuge tried and sweet,
O trysting-place where heaven's love
And heaven's justice meet!
As to the holy patriarch
That wondrous dream was given,
So means my Saviour's cross to me,
A ladder up to heaven.

I take, O cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
The sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain or loss-
My former life my only shame,
My glory all the cross.

These are the words of Elizabeth C. Clephane (1830-1869), the daughter of the Sheriff of Fife, Scotland, in around 1868. It appeared in the "Family Treasury" as did most of her hymns. One of her other hymns is 'There was ninety and nine that safely lay'.

The tune to this is St. Christopher, which is rather melancholy and evokes similar feelings and emotions to those expressed by the writer. The tune is by Frederick C. Maker, who was a professor of music at Clifton College, Bristol.

Here are some of the scripture references to this hymn as per www.hymnary.org. You may have your own or some others that the writer may have had in her mind;

John 19:25 “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”

Isaiah 32:2 “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Isaiah 28:12 “To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.”

Isaiah 4:6 “And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.”

Isaiah 25:4-5 “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.”

Galatians 6:14 “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”

Philippians 3:3-11 “For we...which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh....But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

NAC

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Chapter 3—Shadows of Better Things

Among the many questions on which Christians of an earlier day made great mistakes was that of the Israelitish system of religion. By many it was accounted to be merely a pattern for the Christian Church, the priesthood being the model for the Christian ministry, the congregation of the tribes being representative of the Christian laity. A warranty was thus produced for the particular privileges which the ministry claimed as their special prerogative. Some, looking at the frequent effusions of sacrificial blood, considered this part of the system barbaric and revolting, and utterly unworthy of the Christian's God. In consequence, the Hebrew's God was accounted to be a mere tribal God—akin to Baal (the Assyrian God) and Dagon (the Philistines' God)—a God delighting in blood sacrifice and oft-repeated rite. The real reason for the institution of the Israelitish system was *not* to provide a pattern for the clerical and lay division of the Church in this present dispensation, nor were the constantly repeated sacrificings intended to teach that Jehovah was a mere tribal God. The object behind these things was to shadow forth the cleansing and adoption of that people—but in a later day—as the channel of Divine Love and Redemption for all the peoples of the earth. In thus becoming the adopted channel of the Lord, they would be the means of manifesting God's Holiness to man. In order to prepare them for that Millennial task, God began to teach them, in kindergarten form, the deeper values of life and liberty, of holiness and sin.

To teach them this elementary aspect of redemption truth, God took them apart from the rest of men, and instituted, with great care and detail, the system of the Priesthood and the Law. They needed also to learn that God was holy—a God who could not approve sin. Other peoples associated vile practices with the worship of their gods, and entertained no consciousness of sin therein. With Israel it was intended to be otherwise. Their God desired to erect the standard of purity and holiness in their midst, and to create within them an intense abhorrence for their sin.

In the wicked state of that ancient world, that was indeed a great and exalted lesson to be learned. In order to show them something of the vast difference between holiness and sin, God instituted a series of separations

among men, each stage of which was intended to depict an increased degree of holiness, until, by the emblem of his own Presence in their midst the absolute degree was shadowed forth.

First of all, the entire nation was separated from the rest of men. When God's due time for deliverance had drawn near, God sent Moses to lead them out of Egyptian bondage. "*Israel is my son, even my firstborn...let my son go*" so said Moses to Egypt's king (Exo. 4. 22-23). Among the whole concourse of the nations of the earth to be regathered to the Creator-Father, Israel was intended to be the first. He broke the Egyptian yoke, and set his people free. He led them through the sea, and separated them into a place apart. After this He separated one whole tribe from among this separated people; then a separated family from among a separated tribe; and then a separated man from among the separated family. This man alone of the whole nation—nay of the whole world—was permitted to appear before that holy and mysterious Light wherein God had made his presence known.

In order to begin his great design of blessing all the nations of the earth, and winning back their hearts from sin, the Holy God, who because of Eden's sin withdrew into the distance and the dark, now began his approach to men. In keeping with the Promise made to Abraham, God made this first approach to Abraham's seed, in order to teach them how He hated sin. Accordingly He came and pitched his Tent within the circle of their camp. He came to dwell in that mysterious Light; to be the central feature of their life—to be their God, and take them to be his people. Yet though He came so comparatively near to his chosen people, how far away He really was! Around his Tent, a Holy-Court was marked. A holy fence prevented Israel's unceremonious ingress to the Sacred Court, save when presenting oblation before their God. None save the chosen tribe had daily access (of right and duty) to enter within that white-curtained space. But not all these, those Levi's sons, were privileged to tread the Holy Place within the Sacred Tent. None save the anointed Priest had right of access there. But deeper still, within the Most Holy Place (The *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Israel)—dwelt Israel's God, so near, and yet so far away. The separations among the people were thus augmented by the separations of these respective "places".

Again, the chosen tribe must show distinction in its dress. In robes of linen, pure and white, they trod the holy ground. No other men could wear this dress. Above all this, he upon whom fell the highest choice must dress in robes of even greater distinctiveness, to all else everywhere denied. A golden crown adorned his head—fit emblem of his Holiness to the Lord. Anointed with an holy oil, for other use forbidden, this special man stood forth as the Anointed of the Lord.

Yet even he, the final choice of all these stages of selection, was not permitted at any time, or at his own will or pleasure, to enter before the Holy Light. Not more than once each year, and even then not without the holy blood to make recompense for sin, this chosen Priest was admitted before the Holiness within to leave upon the Mercy Seat the “*Kaphar*” for himself and all the tribes of Israel. There was thus a way between Israel’s need and God’s abode, but how very narrow and circumscribed it was!

How far from the dark distance into which He had withdrawn the Holy God had come, that He might dwell with Abraham’s Seed, and yet how far away his Dwelling-place was pitched! Too far for unaided, uninvited man to reach! That Holy Light, untended and unfed, enthroned aloft amid cherubic wings, was emblem of that Eternal Light in heaven above, the source and fount of Holiness Divine. This was the standard of the Absolute, the Sinless, the Incomparable. Here was All-Holiness, un-derived. No holy oil sustained the Light. Here was no consuming, nor diminishing, nor replenishing. Here was Fulness (Col. 2. 9). Exhaustlessness—Eternal Plenitude. Here was no enthronement of a tribal God. No festal days of Isis or Osiris, of Bel or Dagon could compare with this.

In His own good time the Eternal Custodian of Virtue and Truth began herein anew to grapple with the heinousness and sinfulness of sin. For full two thousand years since Adam fell, God made no effort to hold sin in check, except on rare occasions when vengeance fell on vile unholy men. Death reigned everywhere unchecked before Moses came, but God had sent no further enunciation of his Law (Rom. 5. 14). No sin-sacrifice was offered or accepted throughout those years, for without proclamation of Law, no charge of sin was laid. God gave no law adapted to man’s fallen estate when Adam fell. Thus, without Law defined, no transgression could occur. Man was condemned already, in the first father’s condemnation.

Adam broke the Law, and the broken Law had spoken. Its Judge had issued his decree; its Executive Power had acted, and both the sinner and his seed were under penal claim. No man of Adam's seed could break the grip and power of sin within, nor lessen its contaminating effects without. Still, notwithstanding that man was vile, and wallowed pleasurably in his filth, God had taken no occasion to re-assert his Law, nor to adapt it to the needs of fallen man, until his own due time arrived. When Abraham's Seed had multiplied, and had smarted beneath the tyrant's whip, God's due time had come.

The due time come, the Holiness of God began to grapple with the sinfulness of sin. To show how far it separated God from men He drew around Himself the children of his faithful Friend (Jas.2.23, Isa. 41. 8). Though fallen like all other men, yet God devised a way to use this seed to serve his ends. By bringing them apart from other men, by clothing some of them in special robes, by teaching them a code of adapted Laws, by accepting animal blood as atonement for their sins, God clothed and invested this people, priest and laity alike, with ceremonial saintliness. If they would obey his voice, He promised to accept them as a holy nation, and as a community of Priests, and to place within their Camp his own holy Habitation. This procedure did not free their hearts from sin. It did not cleanse them, once for all, from sin's effects. Their taints remained within, and oft they fell. Yet in spite of this, if they would follow certain prescribed rites, God promised to account them clean, so that they might continue to serve his ends. How like a father, teaching his son to build! The nursery bricks—just tiny blocks of wood—are placed in this or that design, as doting sire thus teaches his little son to learn how it should be done. More than all else, the father seeks to cultivate his offspring's "building sense".

Building it surely is—but oh, how crude and immature, yet exactly the right thing for the untrained infant mind. In course of time the wooden blocks may be superseded by brick or stone and some imposing edifice, artistically constructed, may come forth from brain and hand, as consequence of that kindergarten cultivation of the "building sense". We speak of building sense illustratively here—now let us speak of "holiness sense", as God takes his family of pupil sons in hand. That it was nursery work and kindergarten instruction, all will admit. But in that far time, in

no place else the wide world through, could anything to compare be found.

God was commencing a great design—of this Abraham had been told—but no effective instrument was ready to his hand. God must needs make that instrument in his own way. Hence, He gave them statutes and instructions to expand their minds, so that they could order their lives thereby. The exact value of this instruction is found in its results upon the lives of those rare souls who rose to heights of trust and faith—as Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel, and others too, who shone like stars in a dark sky. Faithful men, of whom the world as not worthy; of whom God bare record that they had pleased Him, yet all in very truth, the product of Sinai's Law and Covenant.

This faithful few, and not the sinful mass, are token of the task God undertook when He began to “make” a people for his Name. That all the rest in Israel, the ox-like stubborn mass, were not pure in heart is only too painfully sure, yet in spite of all their sins and stubbornness, it still remained that they were accepted as the first-fruits, the firstborn, among all the people of the earth. Intrinsically no better than the rest, God accounted them as separate from their fellows, and invested them with an external holiness to make possible their participation with Him in his plans. *“I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people...And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine”* (Lev. 20. 24-26). *“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God...I am the Lord which sanctify you”* (Lev. 20. 7-8). *“I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy...ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”*. (Lev. 11. 44-45).

These words, spoken to the whole nation, describe the whole nation's standing before God. The lesson we must learn in connection with their calling is that their lapses into sin and idolatry did not cancel out their position before God, nor destroy their holy standing as his people, and intended co-workers in the accomplishment of his plans. To enable them to maintain their national holy standing before their Holy God, the whole Levitical system was then set up. Though they were chosen to be a *nation of priests*, yet God appointed for them a chosen tribe to render priestly

service, and a priestly family with its specially chosen priest to slay the sacrifice and offer the blood which ceremonially cleansed them from their sin. Themselves a nation of intended priests, yet God provided for them a family of priests. Israel was at school—its teacher was the Most High God—the Almighty God who had called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—its lesson, first, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; second, its converse postulate, the Absolute Holiness of God. To that end God surrounded them with holy things. He gave them holy days and holy years to keep, He gave them ordinances of service and ablutions to keep them clean, or to restore cleanliness when lost. He gave them holy fire to consume upon a holy altar the oblations which they brought. He gave them holy water wherein to wash after contact with the dead.

Looking back from our own fuller day, how hopelessly trivial and inadequate these carnal ordinances may seem. The constant round of sacrifice with its repeated effusion of blood—the slaughtering of bulls and goats, the repeated washing of hands and robes, the trimming and feeding of golden lamps: the swinging censer while incense burned, the regular eating of permitted foods—oh, how humdrum and monotonous it might seem; a constant round of tawdry ritual and fleshly ceremonial; but let us not forget even in this our “better” day, that this is the most advanced lesson in righteousness and holiness which the whole world of that distant day affords. In no place else than Israel did God condescend to set before the minds of men the first principles of that holier estate where man might live at peace with man, and in subjection to a Holy God. Count it elementary if we will; esteem it kindergarten as we please, but let it not be overlooked that here historic fact attests that in this way the chosen race first began within the bounds of post-Edenic times to lisp its alphabet in the deepest things of life. A people was set apart to God, to serve his deeper purposes; to throw upon the screen of life a picture of the present tragedy of sin and of its ultimate finale in righteousness, when once the “better things” have brought to pass the redemptive blessings for all the nations of the earth. Faulty and frail they were, so often falling as other men to worship idol gods, yet notwithstanding all, they were accounted holy unto God. Not holy in themselves, not undefiled in heart, but for the programme’s sake, God took them as his own. Not from within, but from without that holiness derived. It came from God, and from his presence in their midst and from his expressed desire to have

them cooperate with Him to out-work His great designs.

A great objective was set before them—and even in those early days the creditworthiness of the scheme was attributed to them for the scheme’s sake. It was intended in future times to produce holiness in man—to conquer sin and make man whole and wholesome within. This holy “end” made holy the “means” thereto. And thus in those far-off primitive days, by means of elementary rites and sacrifices God set on record for such to read as can, the basic lesson concerning his own inner Self, and of his unfaltering intention to set man free from sin and death. Intrinsically unholy men were accorded extrinsic holiness, so that they might cooperate with God. Gathered round the emblem of his presence, within the hidden depths of the Holiest place, and set by God each in his own respective relation thereto, High-Priest, under-Priest, Levite, and tribesman, each and all, from centre to circumference afford a picture of holy means dedicated to a holy end. The lesson we must learn today is this, that those whom God calls to be associated with Himself in carrying forward his great design, are made Holy by that association, for the sake of the design.

TH

ONE JOT OR TITTLE

“One jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”

Matt. 5.18

In these words Jesus endorsed the immutability of the Mosaic Law until the time came for its supersession by the higher Law of Christianity. The Rabbis insisted that not one word or letter of the Law could be changed. Jesus went further, to jot or tittle. The smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet is “Yod” or “Jot”, almost like an overgrown English comma. About eight of the letters possessed a minute mark at the top like a tiny crown; this was known as the horn or “tittle”. Thus Jesus referred to the tiniest distinguishing marks in Hebrew writing; not one of these marks. He said, would fail until the Law had achieved its purpose. That purpose was accomplished when Christ, the greater than Moses, was finally rejected by the nation and put to death by them, and the calling of God went instead to the Gentile nations. At that point Christ “took it” (the Law) “out of the way, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2.14).

Both words are preserved to this day in the English language to indicate anything small or insignificant; the derived word “tittle tattle”, meaning idle or small talk, comes from the same source.

Selected (Jan/ Feb '92)

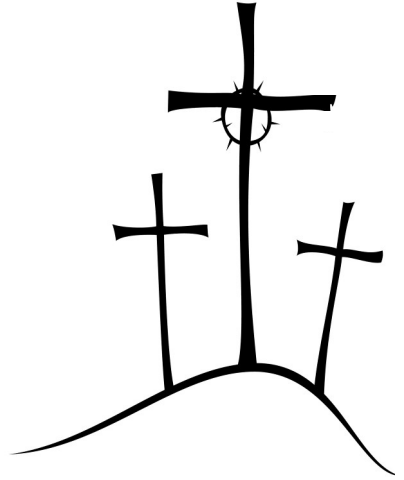
EASTER CAROL

*Good Friday when our Saviour
died
He died for all was crucified
"It is finished" he cried
Hung his head and slowly died*

*Sunday he then rose from the
dead
To the disciples this he said
He then appeared Mary
then Peter and John
Beloved disciple all along*

*He then showed Himself to
all
Excepting Thomas You recall
He also walked The Emmaus
Road.
And explained to them what
was in God's word
That he would die
Then rise again giving hope
to all mankind*

BP



WHOSE I AM

Jesus, Master, whose I am,
Purchased Thine alone to be,
By Thy blood, O spotless Lamb,
Shed so willingly for me;
Let my heart be all Thine own,
Let me live to Thee alone.

Other lords have long held sway;
Now, Thy name alone to bear,
Thy dear voice alone obey,
Is my daily, hourly prayer.
Whom have I in heaven but Thee?
Nothing else my joy can be,

Jesus, Master! I am Thine;
Keep me faithful, keep me near;
Let Thy presence in me shine
All my homeward way to cheer.
Jesus! At Thy feet I fall,
Oh, be Thou my All-in-all.

*The Ministry of Song
Frances Ridley Havergal*

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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May/ June 2014

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Consider the lilies of the
field, how they grow...even
Solomon in all his glory was
not arrayed like one of
these.
Matt. 6.28-29

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 looks for the 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. (Please renew your request each year.)

It is supported entirely by the gifts of its readers, and these are sincerely appreciated.

Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

Money orders. I am sorry to say that our bank no longer accepts these.

A SEASONAL THOUGHT—WHITSUN

Whatever happened to Whitsun ! I remember the days of my childhood when this annual event meant time at church meetings for the bank holiday with extra time with friends and extended family.

This official bank holiday actually began in 1871 and was lost when the Spring Bank holiday, even though people still called it 'Whitsun', was created as early as 1971 for the last weekend in May. According to the previous calendar the 2014 date for Whitsun would be the 8th of June.

This word has faded out of common usage although the Houses of Parliament still use the label 'Whitsun' for the recess, which in 2014 runs from 22nd May to 2nd June.

Whitsun marks the Day of Pentecost being the fiftieth day from the Passover and connecting to the death of our Lord Jesus as the Passover lamb. Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pentekoste* meaning fiftieth and is similar to some words in English which relate to the number five, like pentagon, and pentathlon.

This event ties up with the Jewish harvest of Shavuot, also known in the O.T. as the “Feast of Weeks” which marked the end of the barley harvest and the start of the wheat harvest. According to Rabbinic Tradition, it marks the time Moses was given the law on Mount Sinai, although the scriptures do not record the days for us to verify this. The BBC website also notes the same tie up between the Jewish feast and the Day of Pentecost (Whitsun). In Synagogues prayers are said for the five books of Moses, the Old Testament Pentateuch. Some spend the first night of the feast studying it. Synagogues are decorated with flowers as a reminder of those plants and flowers found on Mount Sinai. However the Feast of Weeks was not instituted until Israel entered the Promised Land 39 years later (Exo. 23.16, Lev. 23.10). This would contradict the connection with the giving of the Law.

But what does it mean to Christians today ? It marks giving of the Holy Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem, as our Lord Jesus had promised, and that power has stayed with us since. Additionally it provides for extra time for fellowship, reading and visiting during the long summer daylight hours whilst we are surrounded by beauty of the flowers and the growth of the crops in the field, which are a testament to God’s creation.

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Gone from us

John A. Parnham (Nottingham)

FRAGRANCE

“The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12.3)

(Weymouth)

Fragrance is one of the extras that a benevolent Creator has bestowed upon mankind. Out of all the bounties of Nature, perfume is one of its peculiar treasures. The vegetable kingdom could easily perform all its essential purpose and remain scentless. Yet the manifold fragrance of bark and stem, of root and flower, of oils, gums and resins, of spices, leaves and fruit are proof that God designed for man's benefit a fragrant world.

Man's first home was a garden. Botanists have discovered an odoriferous flora in all parts of the globe. Their estimate that one in every thirty plants is perfumed is not likely to be exaggerated. A walk round any garden or down any country lane will call the attention to many perfumes which linger in the memory. The western nose is still familiar with the fragrance of lavender, rosemary, mint and thyme, once highly prized in herb gardens, where the heavy scents of old roses, of pinks and wallflowers, lilacs and honeysuckles, limes and sweet briars filled the air with rustic sweetness and the peace of country life.

The sweet scent of drying hay, of crushed grass, the fragrance rising from a field or garden, even from a dusty road newly washed by a reviving shower of rain, have the power to awaken half-forgotten things, to create a yearning for peace and beauty, to soothe the fret and strain produced by the pace and sounds of the hectic, modern world.

This fragrance and the sense of smell are not without design. The sweet perfumes of flowers uplift the spirit. Aromatic perfumes soothe the nervous system wearied by close confinement or too close pressures with the discords and staleness, the more noxious vapours of crowded life.

Perfume of a rich and spicy odour was lavishly used in the east. Kings and priests received a costly anointing, while the ceremonial of religious services smoked with burning incense. The ritual of swinging censers was a means of worship. As sight and sound appealed to the mind, the heart was gratified by the fragrant clouds which rose from the altar of incense. The Bible is rich in metaphors borrowed from sweet smelling plants. The recipe for the holy anointing oil and for the incense of the sanctuary was a closely guarded, Divine prerogative, not designed for private use but for

man's communion with God.

Worship and prayer were the sweet odours of the devout, loyal human heart, ascending to heaven through a fragrant veil in which the Spirit of God commingled awhile with the spirit of his people. These rich perfumes expressed the delight and satisfaction of God in such pure worship, while the worshipper was revived, stimulated and refreshed through the medium of perfume.

The sweet-smelling savour which rises to the Throne of grace is that of sincerity. In John's vision he saw the four and twenty elders having not only harps in their hands but golden vials "full of sweetness" which are the prayers of saints.

Perfume is more than a distilled essence. It is the fragrant breath of Nature exhaled by forest, meadow, mountain and garden, a sweetening of all the air in a silent acknowledgement of the love and loveliness of the creative spirit. If prayer be its counterpart, then it is the spiritual breath of life, as natural and spontaneous, as constant as that floral breath which flows in health-giving waves from vigorous trees and plants. Both are a sign of health, a symbol of joyous care-free existence.

Incense which has anointed kings and hallowed the altars of the Most High has its equivalent in the human heart. The compelling charm of the human being lies not merely in a pleasing, outer appearance, but in an inner grace. As every lovely thing is beauty so every grace is love, the very heart and centre of being, the very essence of God. "*God is love and everyone that loveth is born of God*". Love is the hallmark of God, stamped upon all his creation. As fragrance lies in the heart of Nature, so love lies in the heart of human beings. When given whole-heartedly to God and unselfishly to others in willing service, it constitutes that fragrance of the heart which fills the house, any and every house, where its essence flows from a generous service to refresh and inspire by its stimulating properties.

When Mary of Bethany took her "pound of ointment of spikenard very costly" for the anointing of Jesus, she at least knew what she was doing. So did the recipient of her generosity, for He knew himself to be both King and High Priest, shortly to complete his sacrificial work upon the

cross. Hers was no mere phial of distilled sweetness, but a vase of rare and expensive perfume whose odours would linger on through many days, doubtless refreshing the last hours of the Son of Man, hustled from court to court and finally to Calvary.

“Against the day of my burying hath she done this”. Nicodemus also came with spices, and the women who were first at the tomb. Eastern perfumes were the products of Arabia, India and the spice islands. Great skill was required in their blending. It was a high art and the apothecary of that day was not a seller of medicines but a maker of rare perfumes. The costly spikenard came from a plant growing on the mountains of India. Many aromatic plants grow in the high places, entombed in snow half the year, their flowers white as though expressing that purity and isolation from the valleys below in which they could not live.

Blended with oils and resins the spikenard was sealed with wax into an alabaster container. Some of these have been found in ancient tombs, some still sealed, others broken, their perfume still strong and lingering after the passing of centuries. It was such a vase that Mary unsealed, pouring out its rich contents on the Lord as he sat at supper, the perfume rising like incense, filling the whole house, enveloping all who were there in a holy fragrance which lingers today about all who read the Bethany story.

It was no accident, but a long foreseen incident that He who was both King and Saviour should be publicly anointed with a king's anointing. His very name was “as sweet ointment poured forth”. No other name has so refreshed and stimulated with hope and adoration the hearts of men and women down the years as the sweet name of Jesus, and no life can have ascended to God in such rich clouds of incense as the sacrificial life of the Lamb of God who gave himself and was given of God that love may yet prevail over all that is crooked, evil and perverse.

Jesus both gave and received the choicest perfumes. The inspired Psalmist saw him *“anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad”*.

It is the picture of the heavenly bridegroom, the Kingly Son of God

equipped with power and authority to bring gladness to the earth. In his first brief ministry the healing of his seamless dress, the hem of his garment, brought relief and strength to the touch of faith. He passed through crowds or stood surrounded by sick, neglected people and the perfume of the high places from which he came flowed to them in compassion. He went about in the cities and villages teaching, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

What an illustration of heavenly perfume poured out in fragrant earthly ministry! What a glorious hope of things to come ! When the same power wielded by wisdom and love releases to all flesh the unstinted flow of universal blessing, the very atmosphere will be cleansed and charged by healing virtues. The burgeoning earth, the blossoming deserts, the joyful fields, the rejoicing trees pouring out their fragrances upon the benevolent breezes, will recreate that old, lost garden which had the tree of life.

Jesus prized the lily of the fields, seeing in it a lovely beauty that far surpassed the royal dress of kings. The most fragrant plants are often lowly, humble of dress and inconspicuous in size, yet their hearts are laden with that delicious perfume which cheers and inspires. Large, flamboyant blooms often have little to give but their outward show. The fragrant are tiny bells and florets, the small trumpets, sometimes pouring their perfume on the night air. So does God hide his sweetness in a lowly heart. Behind many a plain face beats a golden heart full of true devotion. The best is brought out of many quiet lives when trouble and sorrow, pain and distress, lay their hands upon the lives about them. The unsuspected kindness and unrevealed goodness breathes out a healing, comforting fragrance into those dark hours.

The precious spikenard is owned by those who dwell with Christ in heavenly places, far removed in thought and conduct from this present world. Like Mary they pour the heavenly perfume garnered from the mountain tops into a fragrant earthly ministry. The lingering incense of their lives writes their daily commendation in the Master's words, "*What she could do she did*". Not creeds but deeds, fragrant with loving kindness, is what people need. The fragrance of love, gracious, delicate, discerning, stimulating, generous and responsive is God's greatest gift to all creation.

AOH

BLUE

Blue is the colour pervading the heavens, therefore it appropriately denotes faithfulness. The mind which has become enlarged by a contemplation of the laws, which govern the heavenly hosts, are conscious that God's loving-kindness, mercy and faithfulness, bespangles the very skies, *"The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord. Mercy shall be built up for ever, thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens "* (Psalm 89. 5,2).

Meditations relative to those regions beyond the confines of this terrestrial sphere, fill us with silent awe. There are potentialities too vast for minds like ours. Think of millions of mighty orbs speeding through space with clock-like precision at the rate of at least twelve miles per second! Day after day over vast periods of time, they have encircled around and filled the universe with grand and inspiring melody.—*"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."* (Psalm 19. 1-2).

What if the chains of magnetic power, which bind the stars together as one grand whole, were to be suddenly severed and broken? Imagination sinks beneath a tragedy so appalling! The clashing of huge solar bodies into myriads of fragments is no event on which to ponder!

With such powerful incentives to faith, a denial of a supreme Controller, indicates a carnality resembling brute beasts. There have been men of the proud, egotistical, and conceited type, who have disregarded the divine possibilities with respect to man. Sometimes these have been rebuked supernaturally. We recall the Bible account of Nebuchadnezzar, who said *"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"* That very hour he became insane and imagined himself one of the beasts of the field, and he continued thus for seven years. (Dan. 4. 29-33).

Then we recall Herod Agrippa, who arrayed himself brilliantly in gorgeous royal apparel and made an oration. He received the plaudits of

the people with an air of complete satisfaction and triumph, as they cried, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" That very day he was seized with a foul disease, of which he succumbed (Acts 12. 21-23).

God's arm is not shortened, for at any time and on any occasion, he can demonstrate his authority and power. His delays only *seeming* delays. That he is well able, if he chose, to swiftly bring men to their proper senses, is evident from the following remarkable narrative, which was recorded in the Chicago journals of 1904.

"Julian Renfro, 21 years old, while engaged with three chums at a game of cards, declared his unbelief in God. He was a "higher critic" of the Ingersoll school and said: "Fellows, if God would demonstrate himself to me in some way—for instance, if he would strike me deaf and dumb, or blind—I might admit his existence." One of the young men was about to reply, when he noticed Renfro turn pale. The next moment the sceptic threw his arms out before him, as if warding off a blow, then he convulsively placed his hands before his face. An instant later he fell forward off his chair, and on to the floor. Since that time he has been unable to speak or hear. In writing he afterwards expressed faith in the Lord, and declared his intention to study the Scriptures, and if the Lord should grant a recovery, he hoped to preach Christ."

God is ever faithful with respect to the promises made to His people. He has promised a glorious fruition relative to the permission of evil, and His word will not return unto Him void. "His anger endureth but for a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psalm 30. 5).

God is always pleased with those who place implicit trust in what He says. He does not however enforce that trust. As an instance of this we go back to the beginning. Among the many spirit beings who beheld the marvels of creation, were our Lord in His pre-human existence, and Lucifer. The former continually revered His Father, while the latter went at a tangent and sought an empire of his own. Had Lucifer interested himself in knowing God, he would have been safeguarded. In other words his faith waned under the Edenic proof-test. God could have manifested Himself with such stupendous glory as to have silenced all thoughts of

disloyalty. It is evident that the Omnipotent sees the wisdom of revealing Himself so far and no farther, in order to allow a certain amount of freedom and volition on the part of His creatures. This is in harmony with the inspired message “*Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*” (Isa. 45 15).

God symbolised the faith of the future royal priesthood by a garment of blue, upon which was placed the ephod (Exodus 28. 31-32). Very significant are the words “*And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod, wholly of blue; and the opening for his head shall be in the midst thereof, —a border shall there be to the opening thereof...the work of a weaver, like the opening of a coat of mail, shall there be to it, it must not be rent.*” (Rotherham) Never once was the faith of Jesus rent, likewise His Bride-to-be, her faith is triumphant to the end!

God is invisible and the only link we have to unite us with Him is by means of the spirit of faith, “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11. 6).

In other words we must “wear our ribband of blue.” During the wanderings of the children of Israel, a man was found guilty of gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. As a punishment he was stoned to death. Then were the people commanded to wear a ribband of blue, to remind them that faithfulness to God’s commands, was of primary importance if they would live (Numbers 15. 32-41). While the Lord’s people, since the resurrection of Jesus, are being judged according to the spirit or disposition (2 Cor. 3. 6), yet they must still remember their “ribband of blue”, which should stretch from earth to heaven. Heart uniting to heart as unto a faithful Creator, for the very foundations of the New Jerusalem is laid with precious blue stones—sapphires! (Isa. 54. 11).

There is a story told of a missionary, who, spent with fatigue, came across a tribe of cannibals. He sought out the chief and motioned for a resting place. Proudly the King drew aside the curtain of his own tent and soon the man was sleeping peacefully. The tribe began to marvel at the extraordinary courage and confidence displayed by the missionary, also they were astounded at the sudden generosity of their chief, who replied

to their queries with the determined remark, “*He trusts us, let us not deny his trust!*”

If a heathen can so reward simple trust, how much more the source of all grace and virtue—“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psalm 125. 1-2).

Faith carries with it knowledge and acquaintance with God, and to attain it, requires diligence with respect to spiritual matters. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11. 1). Only those who have been drawn and begotten of the most High will have had an opportunity to overcome in this age, “and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5. 4). One evidence of overcoming is the obtaining of that disposition which belongs to a little child (Matt. 18. 3). It has been noted that all children born into the world have blue eyes. This is significant to the spiritual Israelite “in whose spirit there is no guile,” and whose faith reaps the great reward of the first resurrection (1 Pet. 1. 1-9; Eph. 1. 18).

With the remainder of mankind the Lord will reveal His largeness of heart in due time. At present, it is with them as with the Jewish people, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11. 32).

FL

FAITH

Securely cabined in the ship below
Thru darkness and thru storm I cross the sea,
A pathless wilderness to me:
But yet I do not fear, because I know
That He who guides the good ship o’er the waste
Sees in the stars her shining pathway traced-
Blindfold I walk this life’s bewildering maze;
Up flinty steep, thru frozen mountain pass
Thru thorn-set barren and thru deep morass
But strong in faith I tread uneven ways
And bare my head unshrinking to the blast,
Because my Father’s arm is round me cast.
And if the way seems rough I only clasp
The hand that leads me with a firmer grasp.

Poems of the Way

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

Part 1 - Destruction from the North

He was, in all probability, director of the musical service at the Temple in the days of King Jehoakim and just before the shadow of Babylon fell across the land. He was a prophet; the particular form of the title used, applied only to Haggai, Zechariah, and himself, appears to indicate that he held a definite prophetic office. He was not one of the wandering seers like Elijah, nor a layman like Nahum, but a priest or a Levite whose prophetic gift had been so far recognised by the ecclesiastical authorities that he was officially accepted as a prophet of God. His life therefore must have been spent in and around the Temple and its services.

He might have known Ezekiel and Daniel; the latter was a boy at the time. He must certainly have been acquainted with Jeremiah and the two men were probably close friends. They both lived at the same time, were probably of much the same age, and shared the same outlook on the things of God. They were both passionate for the righteousness of God and both waited longingly for the coming of his Kingdom. But whereas a great deal is known of the life of Jeremiah, from his youthful days in the reign of good King Josiah until we lose sight of him forty years later in Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem, nothing whatever is known of the life of Habakkuk. He comes upon the scene and delivers his prophecy, calm in its faith and resplendent in its presentation of the majesty of God, and passes out into the unknown. Whether he lived to witness the fall of the city twenty-five years after his prophecy, and was carried into captivity with his nation, or on the other hand had by then been laid to rest to await his reward at the Last Day, we have no idea. His prophecy is his history and his only monument.

Habakkuk was essentially a prophet of faith. He gave the Apostle Paul the inspiration for that greatest of doctrines, justification by faith. "The just man shall live by his faith" cried Habakkuk. Paul sensed the inner truth behind the words and carried them to an infinitely higher plane when he showed that the life enjoyed by the just man can only be received in Christ and through belief in and acceptance of Christ. Habakkuk's own personal faith is revealed from time to time in his prophecy, shining forth like illuminated gold and red initial letters on an ancient parchment. His

sterling confidence in God's holiness and justice despite the apparent triumph of evil (Ch. 1. 12-13); his steadfast belief that God would perceive his standing on his watch, and reveal to him his plans (2. 1); his plea that God would preserve alive his work with his people in the intervening years between the early and the latter fulfilments (3.2); his willingness to "rest" in death until the time of Israel's deliverance and glory at the end of the world (3. 16); and his determination to honour and praise the Lord despite the apparent utter failure of his promises (3. 17), all attest the deep-rooted faith which enabled this man clearly to see, not only the faults and shortcomings of his own people and the retribution that must surely come upon them in consequence, but also the Divine intervention which, at the end of time, would restore that people, repentant and purified, to its destined inheritance, destroy its enemies, and exalt righteousness over evil for ever.

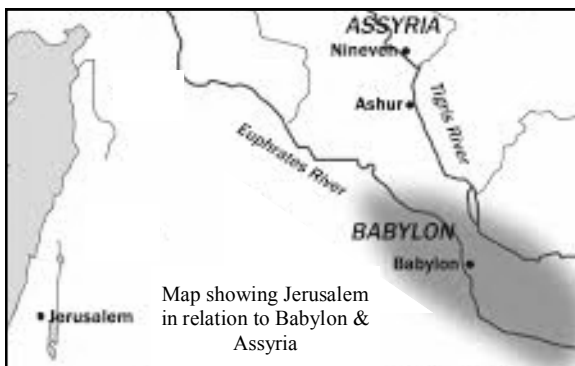
It would be a matter of surprise, therefore, if such a man did not see, in prophetic vision, something of the circumstances attending the dawn of that great day, the day of the Messianic Kingdom. Sure enough, his words do convey some very definite foreviews of these circumstances, and stamp him as one of those prophets who "spoke" of the coming "Times of Restitution" to which Peter referred in his sermon to the people of Jerusalem (Acts 3. 21).

The prophecy of Habakkuk is a striking example of the manner in which "holy men of old" were led to a perception of things relating to the "last days" only after they had been prepared for that perception by an understanding of the presence of sin in the world and the cause of that sin. In these three short chapters there is a whole process of development which must be repeated in the life of every Christian disciple who would understand intelligently "what his lord doeth". Habakkuk was first led to supplicate God on account of the injustice and apostasy which was rampant in his own day. "Why does God permit such evil?" was his question. "*How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save*"? (Ch. 1. 2.). The answer of God when it came to him was not one of reassurance. True, it showed that God was not heedless, and that the wicked would not escape retribution, but it also showed that retribution was to come in the form of an invasion of the land by the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation", under Nebuchadnezzar,

and that the land would be destroyed and laid desolate. Habakkuk, filled with dismay at the drastic nature of the remedy, approached God once more and appealed to his holiness and righteousness, that He would remember his promise and purpose with the children of Israel, and not permit them to be utterly destroyed by the heathen. There was apparently no immediate answer to this plea, and it was then that Habakkuk rose to the heights of faith and took his stand upon the watch tower to await further instruction from God, instruction which he knew would come, because he knew that God was faithful.

His faith was honoured, and the message came through to him. It was a message of woe and condemnation against the persecutors of Israel. It was to be for a long time; as with Daniel not many years later, the vision was for the “time of the end” but at that time it was to speak plainly and not lie. And then, at the end of the message, God appeared to the prophet upon the throne of his holiness in the glory of his heavenly Temple, just as He did to Isaiah (Isa. 6. 1), and gave this faithful servant a vision of the “end time” set against the background of the Exodus incidents. Under those vivid symbols there appears a dual picture of the great Time of Trouble that is to close this Gospel Age and usher in the Millennial Kingdom; a picture that shows, first, God’s working in the affairs of men during the “Time of the End”, the period during which the kingdoms of this world are disintegrating and breaking down in face of the imminent Kingdom of Christ, and second, arising to intervene in that short and final phase of human resistance to the incoming Kingdom which is called “Jacob’s Trouble”, the invasion of the Holy Land by the forces of “Gog and Magog”. And perceiving the final glorious outcome, Habakkuk closes his prophecy with an expression of his own confidence in his awakening from the “rest” of death when that day shall have come, and all God’s promises would certainly be fulfilled.

So his first complaint serves but to awaken him to a consciousness that all is not well with man’s world; it is



sunken in sin and iniquity. *“Why dost thou...cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me...therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous”* (Ch. 1. 3-4).

Habakkuk's complaint was fully justified. The reforms instituted by King Josiah had lapsed very soon after his death. His son Jehoiakim, a young man of twenty-five, had no reverence for God and was much more interested in political bargaining with Egypt. He appears to have been a “modern” ruler surrounded by a “smart set” which had but scant respect for older and wiser counsellors such as Jeremiah, the men who saw quite plainly to what this state of affairs must lead. In consequence public morality declined, injustice and oppression flourished, unbridled commercialism forced the observance of the Sabbath into virtual disuse, and the Temple of God was neglected. The nation had repudiated its covenant with God—the covenant entered into at Sinai upon their organisation as a nation—and in accordance with the terms of that covenant, national disaster must surely follow.

Verses 2 to 4 record Habakkuk's prayer. Verses 5 to 11 tell of God's answer to that prayer. It is a message of condemnation and judgment; prophetic, because the events of which it spoke were yet future. *“Behold ye among the heathen (nations)...and wonder...for, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs”* (1. 5-6). Within a very few years the word was fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar with his armies invaded and ravaged Judah, captured or slew successive kings and many of their godless princes and nobles, and took the people captive into Babylonia. For nineteen years or more he continued those raids until at length the Temple was burned, Jerusalem destroyed, and the land utterly desolated. The historian rightly attributed this great disaster to the people's neglect of the things of God, and their mocking his messengers “till there was no remedy”(2 Chron. 36. 14-20).

The description of the Babylonian invaders struck fear into the prophet's heart. Neither he nor his people knew much about the Babylonians. They had but recently, under Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, become a power in world affairs. The Assyrians had been known and

feared, but Nineveh had been destroyed forty years before, destroyed by these very Babylonians, and the once-dreaded names of Sennacherib, Sargon and Shalmaneser were dreaded no longer. But this was a new menace. *“They are terrible and dreadful...their horses are swifter than leopards,...more fierce than the evening wolves...their horsemen...shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat (the prey)...they shall come all for violence...they shall scoff at kings, and...princes shall be a scorn”* (Ch. 1.7-11). No wonder that the heart of Habakkuk failed him at the terrible prospect and he betook himself again to God, praying this time, not for judgment against the unrighteous, but mercy upon the wayward.

Verse 11 requires re-translating. It should be rendered rather “Then he sweeps by like a wind, he, the guilty, whose might is his god”. An apt description of Nebuchadnezzar, the man who said later “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the (my) kingdom and by the might of *my* power?” (Dan. 4. 30). The keynote of this prophecy is the triumph of Divine influence over the material might of man: it commences with the growth of Babylonian world dominion, the “head of gold” of the world-image (Dan. 2. 38) and its decline to ultimate destruction, and it concludes with the greater world-empire of the end of this Age and that empire’s utter overthrow by Divine intervention at the time of Christ’s Kingdom upon earth.

Now Habakkuk (in vss. 12-17) comes before God in supplication that Israel might not perish utterly. He reminds God of his own glory and power, and of his infinite righteousness. *“Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die...thou hast ordained them for judgment...established them for correction”* (vs. 12). Because God is, and because He is the God of Israel, and his promises are bound up in Israel, it is unthinkable that the nation should die. The Babylonians were “ordained” or appointed for “judgment” and “correction” upon the faithless nation, but not to exterminate it utterly. That is Habakkuk’s first reaction. But then there comes another thought to his mind. Is not the Lord violating his own principles by inflicting evil in order to purge from evil? Is He doing evil that good might come? *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil...wherefore lookest thou upon them (the Chaldeans) that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea...They take...them with the angle...in their net...in*

their drag...and are glad"(1. 13-15). In this wonderful picture the prophet alludes to the helpless condition of his people, as fish in the sea, swept up by the nets and drags and torn away from their native habitat without strength or power to resist. Can this be the will of God, God who is pledged to destroy all evil, God Who said to Moses that He would fill the earth with his glory? (Num. 14.21). Had the Lord indeed given the earth over to destruction and all people on it to slavery and death? These all-conquering hordes had subjugated Assyria and the northern peoples, they held Damascus and the land of Israel to the north of Jerusalem, they ruled Moab and Edom and the desert tribes to the south. Only Judah and the coastlands were left, and now it seemed as if they were to be swallowed up also. What was to become of all God's promises? The heavens were dark unto Habakkuk and the Lord seemed very far away, almost as if He had forgotten his people, and yet the prophet knew within himself that such a thing could not be. But the prophetic message, so full of tragedy and disaster, was trying his faith to the uttermost, and he broke out in the anguish of his heart with the despairing cry which closes the first chapter, "*Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?*"

* * *

But it was at this crisis that Habakkuk's faith inspired him to take his stand upon the watch tower and hearken diligently for the Divine message; and from this point that his prophecy expands into increasingly glorious stages of revelation, taking him far beyond the events of his own days and showing him that which was to come upon his people "at the end of the days". The next issue will tell of his experiences. AOH

Regeneration and the Holy Spirit

"We must be born again". This word of our Lord Jesus has appeared to flame in the way of many, like the drawn sword of the cherub at the gate of Paradise. They have despaired, because this change is beyond their utmost effort. The new birth is from above, and therefore it is not in the creature's power. Now, it is far from my mind to deny, or even to conceal, a truth in order to create a false comfort. I freely admit that the new birth is supernatural, and that it cannot be wrought by the sinner's own self. It would be a poor help to the reader if I were wicked enough to try to cheer him by persuading him to reject or forget what is unquestionably true.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Spurgeon

SAMUEL, GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

3. Old Age

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel." (1 Sam. 8. 1).

There is a world of tragedy enshrined in those few words; tragedy, because the sons of Samuel were not fit for such exalted office. It is one of the most puzzling things in Scriptural history that the man who owed his own position of leadership to his predecessor's failure in the training of his children should, after a lifetime of honoured service, have himself failed in the same respect. The man who saved the nation and gave it its first ordered system of justice and administration did not restrain his own sons from going on the wrong path. Joel and Abiah had not followed in the upright course of their father; they had no share in the piety and godliness of their grandparents, Manoah and Hannah, by now long since laid to rest. They were of a more modern generation and largely heedless of their father's and grandfather's God. So the chronicler records, doubtless sorrowfully, that when they had been promoted to leading positions in Israel, they *"turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment"*.

Whether it was Samuel's judgement that was at fault, or his advancing age—he would now be about seventy-five—or some secret hope that God would honour his family for his own work's sake, and make his descendants pre-eminent in Israel, we do not know. What is certain is that his choice did not meet with the approval of the elders in Israel, and they were not slow to express the fact. It is plain that Samuel's authority was on the wane; perhaps for some time now the people had maintained their allegiance out of gratitude and for sentiment's sake, remembering what great things he had done for them in the days of his maturity, but at this, the first sign that he was in process of relinquishing his personal direction of the nation's affairs, long-suppressed thoughts came to the top, and they gave voice to the desire they had refrained from broaching to him before. *"Behold, thou art old"* they said *"and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."*

In a way, their request was a testimonial to Samuel's own faithfulness to the interests of his people. In the days of Eli apparently no one had cared

whether the High Priest's sons were profligate or not, and it had required the labours of Samuel's lifetime to awaken Israel to a sense of responsibility. Is it that they had at least learned that lesson; that they did wish for strong and decisive leadership and looked with some dismay upon the prospect of another disaster such as had happened in those bygone days, half a century earlier, when the Ark of God had been taken and the country plunged into anarchy? We must not be too unsympathetic toward these men's desire for a king; there might very well have been laudable elements in the mixture of thoughts that led them to make this request of Samuel.

How plain it is that leadership cannot be handed down; the mantle cannot be awarded; it must fall upon the shoulders of the one who is ready to wear it. *"If thou see me when I am taken from thee"* said Elijah to the man who had prayed for a double portion of his spirit *"it shall be so...but if not, then it shall not be so."* That Elisha was such a man, ready to carry on the work begun by his master and mentor, and to exalt it to greater heights, is evidenced by the admission of his companions *"the mantle of Elijah is fallen upon Elisha."* We may have been blessed with great privilege in the Lord's service while we enjoy the full use of our powers, but when the time that we must go hence is come, it is the Lord who determines what shall be done with the remnants of the work that has been our joy and care.

Samuel was disappointed. He did not take readily to the request of the elders, and he took the matter in prayer to his God. The answer is kindly; it is sympathetic; but it is firm. *"Hearken unto the people in what they say, for they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."* That does not mean, as is so often assumed, that the people had rejected God in *desiring* a king. David and others in after times "sat on the throne of the Lord" with full Divine approval and endorsement. The nature of the Messianic prophecies that were yet to be given required that a king reign in Israel to give colour and form to those prophecies, and in order that attention might be focused on *the* king who one day should "reign in righteousness". Their refusal to accept the overlordship of Samuel's sons because they were not upright men must also have had the approval of the Most High. And their loyalty to Samuel himself, God's appointed man, was not in question. Their rejection of

God lay in the fact that, now Samuel was manifestly nearing the end of his life, they were not prepared to trust God himself to raise up a successor who would lead the nation in right ways. They had forgotten that all they then enjoyed of national peace and prosperity was the result of God having raised up one to serve them, one who had been but a small boy in the Tabernacle, unnoticed by and unknown to the nation until the time of need had come. Now, instead of waiting upon God for a further manifestation of his overruling providence, they had rushed in with their own desire that a man of their own choosing and acceptance be installed as king over them. The homage and obedience they should have reserved for God they were anxious now to render to a man of themselves, like the nations that were around them. The terms of the Covenant were largely forgotten, the fact that they could never be quite like the nations about them, but must always be a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, set apart to illustrate in this world and Age the principles that are to govern the next world and Age, when all the world is to come to the throne of Jesus and worship him as King and Lord. They had forgotten all this—or perhaps had never really believed it—and it was this failure that constituted their rejection of God. Samuel they knew and honoured for his past works' sake, but God they did not know.

Thus it was that Samuel was brought into contact with Saul—Israel's first earthly king. The circumstances of their meeting show more vividly than ever how much the star of Samuel was in the descendant. Saul, a comparatively unknown young man, had left his home district to seek his father's lost asses. In company with his servant, he had explored the countryside fruitlessly when suddenly the servant had an idea. "There is in this village," said he, "a man of God—now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go." Neither Saul nor the servant knew the name of this man of God; they only knew that one who was somewhat renowned for his sanctity lived there, and the thought came to them that he might be induced to use his supernatural knowledge or insight to tell them at once the whereabouts of the straying animals. A biting commentary on the religious state of Israel at the time is afforded by the fact that Saul did not anticipate the small service to be rendered for nothing; the "man of God" would expect some appropriate remuneration for services rendered; and so a quarter shekel of silver (today's value equivalent to about ten pounds) which the servant had on his person was

set aside to flavour the deal. It would appear that Samuel's professional skill was not rated very highly.

It is evident that Saul did not know Samuel. Upon entering the village he inquired of a passer-by the whereabouts of the house of the seer (the older term for prophet). "I am the seer" was the reply. In the providence of God Saul had accosted the very man he had come to seek. Samuel was able to assure him that the asses were found, and safe; but he went on to tell Saul that his coming to Ramah was for something far more important than the recovery of a few farm animals. He had come, unwittingly, to be anointed king over Israel.

But how does the position of Samuel stand out in all this? At one time known by "all Israel from Dan...to Beersheba" (1 Sam. 3. 20) as a prophet of the Lord, and established as the first man in all the land, going annually on circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh to judge the people's causes, and so home again to Ramah (1 Sam. 7. 16) he had now evidently retired to a considerable extent from active service and contact with the people, and in consequence was quickly being forgotten by them, so that Saul, coming from less than a hundred miles away, knew him only by repute as a "man of God". Quite evidently Samuel had not been in Saul's home district for many years or the latter would surely have known him by sight. The handing over of judicial responsibilities to the two sons, Joel and Abiah, tells the same story. The conclusion seems to be that in his old age Samuel had commenced to "take things easy" as we would say. And the disruption of his life's work was beginning in consequence.

How many there are, Christian believers who have borne the heat and burden of the day in times gone past, who do this same thing. When the tale of years begins to mount and physical strength commences to ebb, they succumb to the ever present temptation to lay aside the privilege of active service and hard work for the Master, and turn instead to intensive contemplation of the written Word from the recesses of an armchair. So do they become progressively more and more out of touch with the realities of the Christian way. Our Lord has provided that our devotional life and our growth in the knowledge of his Word and his Plan shall be tempered with the experience and broadening effect of outward service, ministries to our brethren and evangelical ministry to the world. The

Apostle Paul, notwithstanding his advancing years, his physical disabilities and his many deep excursions in the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God so manifest in his written works, at no time lost sight of that part of his commission which had to do with God's witness before the world. "*Woe is unto me*" he cried "*if I preach not the Gospel*". The zeal and assiduity with which he carried out the Christian's age-old commission is evidenced by the churches that sprang up wherever he went. If we believe, as we say we do, that we are "immortal until our work is finished", then surely we should continue with undiminished faith and zeal in doing with our might what our hands find to do, until we are physically able so to do no longer.

Reading between the lines, it does seem that this visit of Saul to Ramah had the effect of causing Samuel to bestir himself. He appears to come into the picture again and stand out more prominently in the affairs of Israel. Perhaps the communion he had with God over the matter of Saul's anointing caused him to realise the direction in which he had been tending to drift. Perhaps the demand for a king brought home to him such shortcoming in administration as could rightfully have been attributed to him. At any rate, we hear no more of his sons being judges over Israel. Evidently he brought that arrangement to an end, and from the 10th chapter of 1 Samuel onward, Samuel the aged is once again supreme in Israel and a name to be respected. But that same chapter is also a pointer to the outcome of Samuel's temporary lapse. The Philistines were once more in power in Israel. How long they had been there we know not, but in chapter 10. 5. where Samuel is giving Saul his instructions, he refers, quite casually, to a place in the midst of the land "where there is a garrison of the Philistines" (RSV). Now the Philistines had been heavily defeated at Mizpeh thirty years back and had troubled Israel no more; for them to be thus in occupation again at this time means one thing, and one thing only. It means that the reformation initiated at Mizpeh had lost its force and the people had relapsed into apostasy and idolatry, for only thus under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant would their enemies have been able to overcome them again. Samuel's life ended, and Saul's reign began, under the same shadow that had covered the land when Samuel was a small boy in the service of Eli, the shadow of the Philistine occupation.

So once again Samuel, re-asserting his former authority, called the people to Mizpeh that he might formally present to them their king. This was a renunciation of authority of a different kind; as Saul's authority increased so that of Samuel must decrease. It must have been with a heavy heart that the aged judge recited in the ears of the people the past blessings they had enjoyed from their heavenly King, the future miseries they would experience at the hands of their chosen earthly king, and exhorted them nevertheless to continued faithfulness to their covenant that, ultimately, God could accomplish his purposes in and through them. Then Samuel wrote for them "*the manner of the kingdom...in a book, and laid it up before the LORD*" (1 Sam. 10. 25). In other words, he drafted the constitution of the monarchy, defining the duties and the privileges and the liberties of king and people respectively. It was the last great service he could render to the nation he loved; perhaps it was his greatest service. Perhaps, after all, the order of things that directed and moulded the ways of the kings of Israel for the next five hundred years, honoured to a considerable extent by good kings and probably to some extent at least by even the bad kings, played a great part in making the nation of Israel what it was when the time came for its true King to be presented in the way He came. The prophetic zeal of Samuel blazed up and performed a good work during his own lifetime, but it died away and was extinguished almost before he was dead; the kingdom of which he, under God, laid the foundations, must have owed its five hundred years of existence in great measure to the wisdom and foresight—and experience—that he had put into its constitution, "laid up before the Lord". The effects of that day's work are with us yet, and will never die.

(to be concluded)

AOH

THE FLOWERS TALKED

As up the schoolhouse road I walked
It seemed to me, the flowers talked;
As if they glorified their God all day,
Their little faces—O so bright-
Reflected heaven's glory light.
For rain and sunshine from above,
They thanked the gracious Lord of Love.
Nor did they murmur nor complain
When for a spell there was no rain.
They took whatever by His grace
Came into their specific place,

Their raiment too had come from Him;
That's why they looked so pure, so prim.
Then wondered I if there might be
A lesson here for you, for me!
Perhaps, if we were like the flowers,
What difference then if sun or showers
Should be our lot? We'd see the good;
We'd praise the Lord the best we could;
We'd wear a smile upon our face
To honour His unfailing grace.

Poems of the Way

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings,



The purple-headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning,
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.



The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,
The rushes by the water,
We gather every day.

He gave us eyes to see them
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who hath made all things well.

These are the words of the poet and hymn writer Cecil Frances Alexander (1818—1895). She first had this published in 1848 in 'Hymns for Little Children'. Born in Dublin, Ireland she also wrote other well-known hymns such as, 'There is a green hill far away' and 'Once in Royal Da-

vid's city'. But this is a special one about creation, that has been used widely in schools for morning assemblies for several generations in this area of the world.

Here are some of the scripture texts which are believed to have inspired the writer;

Eccl. 3.11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Nehemiah 9.6 Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Matthew 6.28-29 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Psalms 148 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that *be* above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory *is* above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; *even* of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

Genesis 1.31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good.

NAC

DESTINY OF MAN—A PAMPHLET

This booklet expresses the idea that man was created for happiness as well as usefulness. So life would be if people were in good health, but this is not always the case. In addition some people seem to want to wage war and commit crime. Therefore today's people seem to find themselves in desperate situations.

Ecclesiastes 3.10-13 RSV *"I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; also that it is God's gift to man that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil."*

One surprising observation the writer of this booklet brings to light is that old Sumerian and other ancient writings have the biblical starting point that everything in the beginning of man's time was wonderful, with perfect people living in harmony with God, rather than taking the view that man has been improving his situation. This corroborates the Biblical account of the garden of Eden.

It tries to answer questions such as 'what is goodness?', 'what is evil and sin?' and would God's kingdom and ultimate victory be imperfect and incomplete if evil were allowed to exist eternally?

However it was written 50 years ago and the wording is often 'old fashioned' and quotes people that this generation would not know.

Nevertheless one of our readers was 'uplifted and comforted by its content' and that it 'is very relevant to today's people'.

This pamphlet is available free on request. Please email
mailing@biblefellowshipunion.co.uk
or by post to the address on the back page.

HE IS ABLE

In the beginning God created the sun, moon and stars and also prepared the earth and populated it with plants and animal life and created man in His own image for it. “And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1.31.

We are told that God will have all His work on earth fully in harmony with Him. We know that this will be so for He is able. We are told in Malachi 3.6 “I am the LORD, I change not.” He will not break His promise. He has said “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the deep.” Isaiah 11.9. What God has finished in His intentions must also be finished in reality, for His word does not return to Him void. He is able.

But the mighty God has also revealed to us that “the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” Psalm 132.13-14. John was shown a vision of this Zion. Revelation 21.9-11 says “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away...to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God.” John was shown this vision at the very beginning of the Gospel Age when the preparation of the heavenly Zion was only commencing. John saw the fulfillment of God’s word or intention.

God’s attentions are not limited to one field. He works continuously in many ways at once, but His own special family in Christ is the great desire of His heart. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my special treasure.” Malachi 3.17 (margin).

It was surely Paul’s full realization of this his Father’s fondest desire, after many years of close fellowship with Him, that called forth the words in 2 Timothy 1.12 “I know in whom I have trusted, and am confident that He is able to keep what I have entrusted to Him until that day”.

“He is able”. We all know He is able in the sense of being All-seeing, All-powerful and Everlasting. But Paul’s words to Timothy speak of a rich personal relationship—something that was his very own.

We want to share the same fellowship and also say with absolute conviction, “He is able to keep what I have entrusted to Him until that Day”. And we will know He is able through daily experience of His dealings with us.

There would be nothing for Him to keep if something had not been entrusted to His keeping. And so there must be a continual presenting of our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. Romans 12.1.

The scriptures show that nothing is left to chance in the selection of the members of Christ. It is not a matter of our waking up one morning and resolving to follow Christ or of being suddenly converted at a moving service. These may indeed play a part, but only if the Lord has worked first in us to that end. We can probably all testify to the fact that the Lord carefully prepared our hearts for consecration long beforehand.

The Lord caused David to write in Psalm 22. 18, “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” The fact that this very thing happened to Jesus’ clothing hundreds of years later is not only one of the prophecies that convince us that He was indeed the promised Messiah; it also tells us of the foreknowledge of God. God’s foreknowledge is obviously not a vague and general thing. We surely cannot help concluding that there is not any small detail or happening which has ever or will ever occur that our Father did not know of from the very beginning of time. So, not wishing to limit His foreknowledge, we have to admit that He is able to foreknow which individuals will become members of the Bride of Christ.

So our Father knows all beforehand. The plagues on ancient Egypt were a spectacular example of this. God was not working on the spur of the moment. He had from the beginning intended to manifest power in this way as we read in Exodus 9.16 and Romans 9.17. It was said to Pharaoh, “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the

earth.” We would have difficulty in drawing the line between where the Lord actively interferes with the course of events concerning individuals or nations and where He lets things proceed uninterrupted. It is encouraging to remember what the angel said to Mary in Luke 1.37. “With God nothing shall be impossible.” He is able.

However we are not forced to become or remain Christians against our will. But that does not mean that the Lord does not arrange that the case for becoming a follower of Christ is put before us in such a manner that we shall find it wholly acceptable. Similarly when He has brought us to the point where we henceforth desire only to live a life of dedication to His will, He does not force us to do it; though things would become very uncomfortable for us if we took a mistaken course. If ye are without discipline, training, instruction or chastening whereof all sons are partakers, then ye are not truly sons. Hebrews 12.8.

However, it is the love of Christ which constrains us to walk the way He walked that we which live, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us, and rose again. 2 Corinthians 5.14-15.

Let us see what the scriptures say about our Father’s ability to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that Day.

He is able to keep us humble. In Daniel 4.25-27, it had been prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would be driven out as a wild beast. Daniel advised the king to break off his sins in righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it might be a lengthening of his tranquility. Twelve months later he boasted of his achievements; not giving glory to God. The decree of the Most High was executed. But it had the desired effect when Nebuchadnezzar returned to his senses for Daniel 4.37 contains the words of a humble man. “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” So how much more is He able to make and keep us humble and teachable also, for “the proud He knoweth afar off.” Psalm 138.6.

In Hebrews 2.18 we have another aspect. He is able to succour us in time of need. Our Father has vested in Jesus the full power to help us in

temptation. The verse reads “In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 4.15 and 16 elaborates further. “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Yes, He is able to succour us in time of need.

In Romans 14.4 we learn that He is able to strengthen faith. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” So if you feel your faith is weak, fear not. Wait trustfully, for God is able to make you stand”. Remind yourself of Isaiah 40.29 & 31. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.” “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”

He is abundantly able to strengthen faith.

Sometimes we need to remember that He is able to save from all trouble. In Daniel 6. 21-22, poor King Darius had spent a sleepless night while Daniel was in the lion’s den. Daniel’s answer to his cry must have deeply moved the king. “O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”

There is of course another spectacular example of physical deliverance in the book of Daniel. In chapter 3 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were delivered from the burning fiery furnace which was heated seven times more than usual. God is indeed able to deliver us as He did them.

But there is another lesson in this portion. Daniel 3.17 says “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” We must always remember the “If it be so”. The three Hebrews

knew God was able to deliver them, but even if He did not, they still could not worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image.

This brings us to the lesson that God is able to give strength to go through the severest trial if the need arises.

Matthew 20 describes how the sons of Zebedee were brought by their mother with a petition regarding their position in the kingdom. In verses 22 and 23 Jesus says "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They say unto Him, "We are able." And He saith unto them, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." There is no doubt that these two disciples found later that their answer "We are able" was only possible in practice because their Father gave them strength sufficient. Paul had something to say on the strengthening power of the Lord in 2 Timothy 4.16 to 18. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever."

The Lord is able to give strength for the severest trial.

Our Father is able to keep us all through our pilgrim journey.

John 10.27 to 29. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand". He is able to keep us.

Romans 8.38 and 39, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Since “creature” has the sense of created thing, we are reminded that God who is the Creator is superior to every other nameable thing. We are loved with an everlasting love by Him who is able.

And Jude 24 speaks of “Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

Yes, God is able to keep us all through our pilgrim journey—and what an end—faultless before even His glorious presence.

We all know that in keeping that which we have committed unto Him against that Day, God is able to pay us back unsearchable riches in return. Keep thinking of it—presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. He is able to do this. 1 John 3. 2 says “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” He is able to make us like Him. Peter had this in mind when he wrote 2 Peter 1.3-4. “His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

He is able to make us partakers of the divine nature. Let us make the precious promises our very own that our hope in Christ may be fulfilled for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.(Eph. 3.20-21)

DL

But, ‘I know whom I have believed;
and am persuaded that He is able
to keep that which I’ve committed
unto Him against that day’

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Part 4—Holiness comes to a people

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, and came to dwell with them in the wilderness, He set an illustration of a twofold aspect of the attribute of holiness. In the Shekinah Light which dwelt in the “Most Holy” we have the emblem of inherent holiness. Another term for that would be “subjective” holiness—or holiness of the “Subject” or “Being” to whom the attribute referred. To this aspect of Divine holiness God’s coming to dwell with Israel made no difference, for even in those remote times when God had withdrawn Himself, and was putting forth no active power to arrest the increasing prevalence of sin, within Himself God’s essential holiness remained unchanged and undiminished. Its existence as an attribute to God did not depend upon His activities against the course of sin. At rest or at work that essential intrinsic holiness persisted and continued because of Him being Who and what He was. That unchangeable attribute of God was represented by the mysterious Light within the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. There was nothing in the whole Tabernacle structure to be compared with that peculiar Light. It hung between the Cherubim, unsustained and unchanged—ever and always a mysterious glow of light emitting its rays without Priestly care or other earthly derived attention. No human labours could improve it, no human effort could quench it. It came from God, and was maintained by God. It was the token of the presence of God. It was the emblem of the holiness of God. It was of this Light God spake when He said to Moses, “*..I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat, from between the Cherubims..*” (Exo. 25. 22). From above the Mercy Seat! From between the cherubims! Exactly the location of that Holy Light. From that location God said, “I will meet with thee”. That Holy Light positioned there between the Cherubim was the nearest approach to a revelation of the exalted and holy Personality of the Lord God of Heaven and earth which could be disclosed to mortal man—fit emblem of One who had an inexhaustible fount of life within Himself, and who in Himself and by Himself upheld the absolute standards of virtue and purity.

The arrival and presence of that Holy Light in the dark depths of Israel’s Tabernacle represented that the Holy God had come down to earth to

begin the preliminary stages of His plan for cleansing it from sin. To that far-distant project of purifying the world from sin God called Abraham's seed to be His servants and associates. By coming down to earth in emblematic sense, and by drawing Israel's hosts around His dwelling-place, the native inherent holiness of God began to be active against sin. It set before itself an objective, and applied itself to that end. To accomplish that objective it gathered around itself and absorbed within itself the whole nation of Israel.

The nation complete and entire, the tabernacle in all its parts and the mysterious self-supporting Light were all essential parts of the one Divine instrument for eliminating sin. The holy Light in its relation to Israel was as the centre to the circumference, as the hub to the wheel. "It" and they were one, each in their respective place, each with its respective part to play in the great task of sanctifying the earth. That Holy Light was directive and advisory in its relation to the entire Camp. It gave guidance when need arose. That Holy Light was as the Watchman against holiness; it smote the sons of Aaron when using strange fire, unholy fire. It was—shall we say not irreverently—as the highest directive officer of the co-partnership concern. Inasmuch, however, as here on earth both manager and messenger are parts together of one firm, so God and His chosen people Israel were associated together in God's scheme to rid the world of sin.

This association of the Eternal God with the seed of His friend (James 2. 23) is beautifully shown in Rev. 4 and 5. The personality of God is represented by the jasper and sardine stone, seated on the centrally positioned throne. The throne supports are of such a form as to correspond to Israel's banners—a lion, a calf, a human face, a flying eagle. This combination shows Israel associated with the throne of the Living God. Around that central throne, but of smaller size, are four and twenty other thrones, occupied by the same number of elders, crowned with golden crowns. These represent the priestly and kingly attributes joined in one—kings and priests—and stand out from the elect nation as their very elect and choicest members. It is a picture of a priesthood which has superseded the Levitical order—the great original, of which Aaron's was a type.

The jewel-pictured occupant of that central throne, the throne itself, and the circle of priestly-royal elders are joined together in solemn session, awaiting the coming of Judah's Lion—a Lamb as it had been slain, for the release of a temporarily lost inheritance. This was the great design with which the Ancient of Days set out. This was the master-draught of His plan, of which the events at Sinai, and in wilderness days constituted only a kindergarten copy. God and Abraham's chosen seed were to be as "one", to accomplish the grand redemption of the world, set out in symbolic language as a Holy City, lying foursquare (Camp-like) with ever-open gates into which all the earthly kings should bring their glory. God's purpose stands unchanged. Christ supersedes Moses but all else remains unchanged.

When God thus set forth this scheme as His objective, the holiness which required the earth to be made free from sin—which holy intention was the basic cause for the plan being formed—became objective too. The intrinsic indwelling holiness within the heart of God began working in an extrinsic—external manner to make His environment (which means all creation) clean. When God took Israel into co-partnership with Himself (represented by placing His Holy Light in their midst) His own objective holiness came down to rest on Israel as well.

Thus the sublime subjective holiness (represented by the Holy Light) became manifest and active, as an objective holiness too, in time it began to act and work with Israel and through Israel for the elimination of sin. God's holiness was thus revealed in its twofold aspect (a) *subjective* (an indication of what He is—the Holy One of Israel) but it became (b) *objective* too (indicated by what He was about to do).

It is necessary for us to make this distinction clear between these two phases of holiness, for Israel shared in one phase, but not in the other. Israel, by her association with her God, was made objectively holy—holy for a purpose—but most obviously she was not made holy subjectively, i.e. she was not holy in herself—she had no real holiness of heart. It is on this basis of a two-phased holiness that we can approach New Testament days. These things and experiences in Israel were the pattern of the "better things" of our later days.

To teach men of this earth (in the only way that man could learn) that the Most High God claims in Himself to be the be-all and end-all (or as Paul puts it “that God may be all in all”) of their being, God commanded men and utensils (alter, censers, tables, etc....) to be exclusively set apart to His service. So long as these men used these utensils in the prescribed way, that is, in His exclusive service, God accounted both men and utensils holy. This holy standard did not lapse because, at times, these men failed to follow precisely all the prescribed details of their instructions. God had made provision for the unintentional lapses, both on a national and individual scale, by means of vicarious sacrifices (sin-offerings, both personal and national—see Leviticus, chapters 4 to 7, and Leviticus 16).

When the more faithful in Israel, those who had higher vision and keener hearts than their fellows (see Heb. 11) had become thoroughly and appreciatively familiar with this kindergarten idea of holiness (separateness unto God) God advanced His purpose to a higher stage. By reason of the sacrificial death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, God was able to carry the theme of revelation (that is, redemption by blood) up from the lowly, limited, literal level of fleshly Israel, to the higher, unconfined spiritual level of spiritual Israel, in this way carrying the thoughts and understanding of the responsive among His people up to the great realities of His plan. In learning these higher things His faithful ones were still at school, still learning the one great lesson concerning holiness and sin, but were advanced upwards from the kindergarten to the qualifying grade. The little square wooden blocks of the nursery were no longer necessary for these pupils to continue developing the “building sense”—that is, the sense of holiness. This sense—the awareness of God—had already considerably developed, and now the time had come to put realities in place of typical and shadowy things; but in so doing God used the various objects of the Mosaic ceremony and ritual to illustrate the verities of the Christian faith.

The Holy Spirit used those sacrifices and ablutions and tabernacle arrangements generally as patterns to lead Christian thought to see that the believer in Christ—each separate believer—was himself a Temple of the Living God (1 Cor. 3. 16). At the same time, but from another point of view, each believer was a “royal priest” (1 Pet. 2. 5 & 9), and from yet

another point of view each believer was “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12. 1, Rom. 6. 13 & 19). On this higher level of Christian tuition it was learned (as Egypt on the Passover night), that a “firstborn” class stood in special relationship to the plan of redemption—called to supersede the natural firstborn, priestly class, just as “Christ our Passover” (Lamb) superseded the Lamb whose blood be-sprinkled the doorposts of Israel.

A better and greater Priest with better sacrifices had superseded Aaron’s line with its bulls and goats. A better Mediator, too, had been appointed to take the place of Moses. A better, larger, longer Sabbath had been designed to displace the typical seventh day. Thus, those lowlier, carnal conceptions, so long current in Israel, became the embodiment of better, fuller, nobler conceptions when carried up into the Christian’s thought and life and experience. The form of the expression was changed, yet notwithstanding that, its germ and theme remained the same, just as the bud, fully developed into the flower, is changed in form, yet withal remains the same.

From first to last, on lowlier typical level, or on a higher spiritual plane, the purpose of the Most High God remains the same. The twin-theme today, as it was in ancient time, is “holiness” and “sin”. These major chords are made up of many accordant sounds. We speak of atonement, redemption and precious blood, we tell of baptism into His death, and companionship of Christ, and grace to help in time of need, but back of all these kindred themes stands God Most High. He it was who caused them all. Sacrifice and favour are all of His devising. It was God Himself who so loved the world as to give His Son (John 3. 16). It is His own Love which is commended by the death of Christ (Rom. 5. 8), and thus, when we rejoice together over redemption’s wondrous story, each note of the harmonious chord harks back to the Most High God, who, before time began, arranged His plans to provide for every such emergency. Back of all these plans, deep in the heart of God, we reach the basic theme of all—that unchanging intensity of desire for the absolutely good, the altogether pure, the unchangeably true. That was the first spark that fired the whole train, and from which all subsequent energy derives.

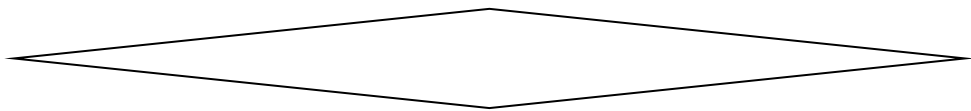
Again, we speak of evil and its long permission; of the reign of death; of the ravages of sin; of unholy men, and unrighteous rule. We speak of

Gentile supremacy and of Israel's fall; we tell of Armageddon and all its fury, of a crushing time of trouble such as never was before and then we look forward to the rounding up and chaining of all these things, of Satan's imprisonment and final destruction. Back of all this permission and suppression stands God Most High. He it is Who has determined that though evil shall be triumphant for a time, it will be completely overthrown in the end. He it is Whose mighty power will bring it to its end. No one else is equal to the task.

Therefore behind the scenes of right and wrong there is One whose abhorrence of sin is so intense that He will not rest content until it is destroyed both root and branch. Again we reach the lesson's point, that Divine holiness will not permit its universal environment to be polluted forevermore. Again we reach the conclusion that the mainspring of all Divine energy and all Divine intention for uprooting all evil, and establishing forevermore the good and pure, is that supreme intense moral force which burns in the heart of God. Behind and beneath the attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power, is the unfathomably deep moral platform on which they all are built—the holiness of God.

The glorious Gospel truth in which we all rejoice is but the same theme continued, but in higher grade, than was taught to Israel in the wilderness. Moses, under God, was the teacher then. Christ, under God, is our teacher now. Things which "might be touched" and seen were the illustration Moses used. We learn of things unseen; but through it all the lesson theme is just the same. Behind it all is God Most High, glorious in His holiness, pure beyond compare, working out His great designs to free the world from sin. Holiness must triumph over sin, and God is holiness sublime!

TH



My God I thank Thee, who hast made the earth so bright.
So full of splendour and of joy, beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here, noble and right.

Bible Students Hymnal 243

"The flowers appear on the earth..."

Song of Solomon 2.12

*Just yesterday, proud in its leafy bower,
I saw a real rose, a perfect flower,
And folded in its golden petals lay
The glorious promise of a summer's day.*

*Its heart was red, as if pure blood had stained
Each golden petal—some were finely veined,
Like flesh...and yet not flesh—those petals were
A living silk, most wonderful and rare.*

*Did sin-free Adam, when in Eden's bliss,
See any flower more beautiful than this?
Was there a brighter glow, a sweeter scent,
By paths where Eve, free from the curse, once went?*

*Today, I thank my God, Who gives my eyes
This sign, this early glimpse of Paradise;
I thank my God, that He still fashions here
The rose, His messenger of hope, each year.*

The God of all grace and me—Maurice Cox



*Ye curious minds, who roam abroad,
And trace creation's wonders o'er,
Confess the footsteps of your God,
And bow before Him, and adore.*

Poems of Dawn,

NOTE ON PSALM 126.5-6

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

This theme of sowing in tears and reaping in joy was more than mere poetic fancy. It was an allusion to a pagan custom with which the Israelites, only just returned from Babylon, must have been thoroughly familiar, associated with the worship of the Babylonian god Tammuz, the god of vegetation and springtime and new life. The sowers went out casting seed into the ground, weeping as they did so because the seed must die; when the time of harvesting the corn was come they went out again with ceremonial rejoicing because it was the time of new life for the world with the gathering of the crop. In their old legends Tammuz, the young and beautiful god, had been treacherously slain and had gone down into the underworld, and with his going the trees and plants wilted, the flocks and herds failed to bring forth their young. But the underworld could not hold him and he came back, and with his coming new life blossomed forth on earth and all was well. It is impossible not to see in that old pagan legend an anticipation of the death and resurrection of Christ with all that these entail; in that ceremonial weeping because the seed sown must die, and rejoicing when it sprang forth into new life, an anticipation of Christ's own words *“except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”* (John 12.24). The elaborate mythology of the Babylonians contained some seeds of truth which must have survived from an older and happier time when men, not so far removed from the Fall in Eden, possessed a tolerably clear knowledge of the principles of the redemptive plan of God. AOH

BIBLE STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

Tuesday 12—Sunday 17 August 2014

Theme—I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14.6)

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

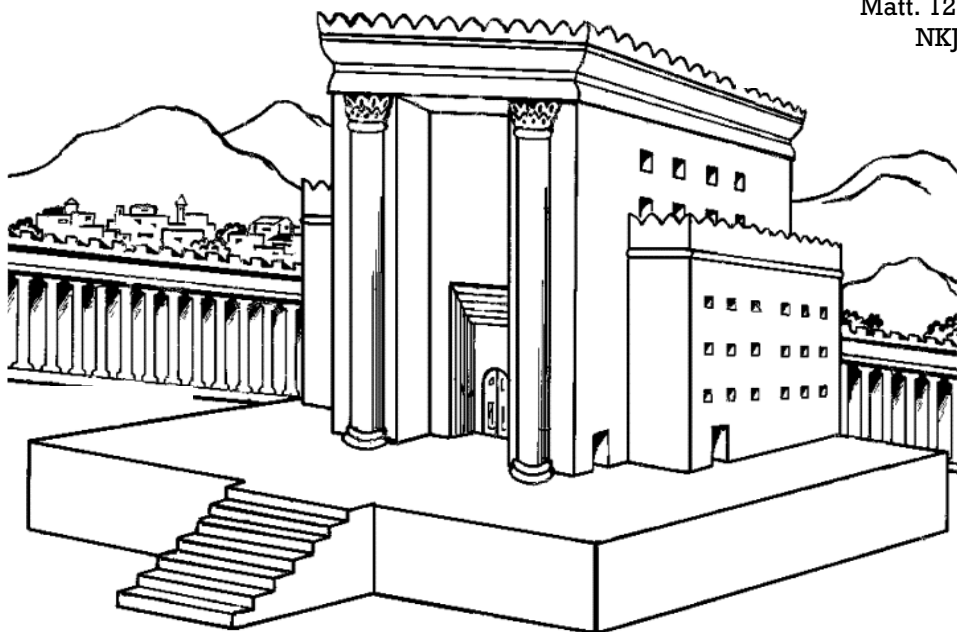
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That in this place is
One greater than
the temple.
Matt. 12.6
NKJV



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 looks for the 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. (Please renew your request each year.)

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A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart." Prov. 3.1 (NIV)

This scripture is one of the many tattoos on David Beckham's well inked body. It would seem unusual for such a celebrity to sport such a scripture, even if he is known to be the father of three sons. However further investigation reveals that his maternal grandfather was indeed Jewish and David has been quoted as saying that he is 'half Jewish' (Wikipedia) and Wikipedia also quotes him in his autobiography as saying that he had "probably had more contact with Judaism than with any other religion".

Fathers and sons play their part in the Old Testament from Adam's sons Cain, Abel and Seth. Faithful fathers and sons like Abraham and Isaac. It features fathers with bad sons such as Eli and Samuel, contrasting fathers and sons such as Isaac with Esau and Jacob and fathers of many sons such as Jacob and King David.

But it is interesting to reflect on the contrast between the relationship between Isaac and his favourite son Esau, and Rebekah and her favoured son Jacob, how Rebekah was able to nurture Jacob in the ways of God

and to have respect to his plans and purposes.

But Proverbs 3 is really talking about the Heavenly Father and his sons, which includes those of the nation of Israel to 21st Century sons and daughters. Verse 6 in Proverbs 3 bears this out when it says “In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (NKJV). The message is to follow our Heavenly Father’s wise laws and teachings and to keep them close to our hearts and endeavor to live them day by day.

It’s in the heart where such thoughts can be nurtured, like Rebekah nurtured her favourite son. It says in verse 5 of the same chapter that we should trust in our Heavenly Father with all our heart. The greatest commandment also tells us that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart.

However at this present time many people do not have respect to God’s teachings. Therefore we rejoice in the New Covenant when the time will come that God will write his teachings in mankind’s hearts and minds (Jer. 31.33-34 & Heb. 8.10-11).
NAC



PSALM 125

They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

²As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

³For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

⁴Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

⁵As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

<p><u>Gone from us</u> Q.F. Irwin (Polegate)</p>
--

BUILDING TOGETHER WITH GOD

“But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Cor. 3. 10-15).

Do you know that every individual Christian who is striving to enter the Kingdom of God is represented in the Scriptures as putting up a structure, a building, a faith structure, if you please, and that upon the kind of material we use in that building depends our future, whether for happiness, peace, contentment and reward; or sorrow, chagrin, disappointment and loss?

The Apostle first counsels us as to the proper foundation for our faith structure, stating that no man can lay a foundation that can bring us eternal life; because no man can give a ransom for his brother. No man can lay a foundation that can give a hope of future blessings. Therefore, *“other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”*. (1 Cor. 3. 11). *“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4. 12). But now, since Jesus is the proper foundation for our building, upon what does the foundation rest; what was it laid upon? All foundations must rest upon an underlying basis of some kind, and we reply by quoting our Lord’s own words. He said He came not to do his own will but He came to do the will of his Father in heaven. And his Father’s will was his Law, which is as eternal as God himself; therefore Christ, the Foundation Stone, was laid upon the eternal principles of God himself.

The Apostle uses very powerful symbolism to represent the material we use in the construction of these buildings, namely, gold, silver, and precious stones. These symbolise those things in our faith that have the qualities of gold, silver and precious stones, qualities that are fireproof, qualities that fire will not burn; they are also rain and waterproof. Water is a symbol of Truth, and water will not melt them, cause them to decay or

wash them away.

On the other hand, both fire and water will purify them and cause them to shine the more brightly, because they represent most beautiful truths. Gold represents Divine truths of the Kingdom; silver represents heavenly or spiritual truths of the Kingdom; precious stones represent the human or earthly phase of the Kingdom. On the other hand, Paul uses wood, hay and stubble to represent speculations, theories and opinions of men, which have qualities corresponding to the qualities of wood, hay and stubble. These are plentiful and cheap; they are neither fire nor storm-proof, but are subject to decay and destruction by both fire and storm. Therefore, the Apostle urges, "Take heed" what kind of material you are using in these faith structures, for we ourselves have to work with the kind of material we are using in our buildings.

It is our building in the sense that we individually are responsible for the material we use. God permits us to select the material, and He further permits us to supervise and arrange our entire faith structure.

Nothing is forced upon us by God. He does say, however, through his mouthpiece, the Apostle Paul, "*Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*" (1 Cor. 3.10) But if we co-operate with Him, by using the materials He offers us and his advice in the selection of material, and labour together with him, then He is pleased to have us call it "God's Building," for by so doing it gives us and our building a distinction and a reputation for first-class building and workmanship. "*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*" (1 Cor. 3.9). The kind of building we erect depends on the kind of material we use in the building, for no building is better than the material in the building. A building built of wood, thatched with straw, and covered with paint, may look fairly well, and its builder and occupant may for a while feel reasonably secure and contented. However, in the time of fire, rain or storm, the building will be almost certain to be damaged, if not altogether ruined or lost, with only the foundation remaining. Similarly, a faith structure made up of uncertain theories, opinions, guesses and speculations of men, may be put together quickly, cost but little, and when glossed over with oratory and fine speeches, may look reasonably well so far as outward appearance is concerned and its occupant may feel quite satisfied for a time.

But when the fiery experiences and the storms and floods of life come, the weakness and undesirability of such a structure will be clearly manifest, resulting in sore disappointment and loss.

God has the mine and the quarry (the Bible) and that contains all the materials for the best of buildings, the gold, silver and precious stones. God freely offers these materials to us for our building, if we will only spend our time and labour to dig them out of his mine and quarry. And for our helpfulness, God has provided the tools by giving us concordances, Bible dictionaries, histories, helps, teachers, for we could not have all these if God had not given them to us. And, still more, God has given us the blueprints in the “types and shadows” of his Law. He has laid before us the plans and the specifications, and urges us to build well; and he assures us that if we do so our structure will stand the test of the fire and the storm which will try every man’s work. Upon the other hand, the cheaper and destructible materials will but feed the flames and result in utter disappointment and loss to its owner.

Now let us keep in mind that all who build their faith structure upon the proper foundation, Christ’s great redemptive sacrifice, are Christians, regardless of whether or not they are wise or unwise in the selection of material for their faith structure. If part or all of our faith structure is composed of the wood, hay and stubble of men’s theories and speculations, we may be called very unwise or foolish virgins. The Apostle’s word further declares: *“Every man’s work shall be manifest: for the day shall declare it,...of what sort it is.”* (1 Cor. 3.13) God has arranged for trying experiences, symbolised by a fire and a great storm, which will be permitted to test the life-work of every man in the church so that it is but a question of time until every vestige of the wood, hay and stubble—the opinions, theories and speculations of men—everything that is of man and not from God, shall be destroyed.

But why all the destruction? We answer: God is building a city called “The City of God,” “The Holy City,” “The New Jerusalem,” and all these buildings we are erecting, with their inhabitants who have passed the test of the fire and the storm, shall become a part of that city, and that city will be the Divine government. A city of gold, with streets of pure gold, with pearly gates and precious stones in its foundation, and its inhabitants with garments wrought with pure gold; therefore that which is represented by

the wood, hay and stubble, can have no place in that city. Then how will all these tests be applied?

Christ said, *“I am the Light of the world”*: and light is the enemy of darkness. The coming of light dispels the darkness. Darkness of error, superstition and men’s opinions is giving way to light and truth, and will so continue until the world is cleansed of all human philosophies and speculations. Paul further tells us that these unwise Christians, because of the poor material used, will in this time of fire, suffer loss. What will they lose ? They will lose their buildings, their faith structures, their cherished opinions and conceptions, concerning the Lord and his Plan, upon which they may have spent many days of toil and labour to put together. All will be shown to be false, without a Scriptural basis. And all hopes and ambitions resting on those unsound teachings and principles must go down also. Yet so long as they continue to remain on the rock-foundation, CHRIST, and give evidence of sincerity in the same, we are assured that they will be saved, “yet so as by fire”.

While it is true that the gold, silver and precious stones are scarce and difficult to obtain, they are of great value, because of their inherent qualities which endure the fire and the storm. Since these materials symbolise the Truth, we observe the significance of their scarcity, and the fact that they are difficult to obtain and the necessity of digging for them as for hidden treasures.

Those who build with the material symbolised by the gold, silver and precious stones are erecting a structure that will abide throughout all time; they are using indestructible material and proving themselves real overcomers of the world, the flesh and the adversary; for it is the Truth, and the spirit of the Truth, that enables the true Christian to stand firmly against all the enemies of God. It is the revelation of Divine Truth that supports faith in the hour of trial and when all earthly friends forsake us. Such overcomers “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” and at last will be with him, as the Bride of the Lamb, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord.

There are some who build their hopes of acceptance with God, and of becoming heirs of the Kingdom, on the basis of their good works, or their wonderful works of service, and outward activity, to the neglect of the

character within, which should be godlikeness. Such are surely building with poor material; their structure will not stand the final test which the Lord will apply. The good works, and the service in the ministry of the Word are all important enough, but Paul tells us that the Lord is pleased with all this only when it is the Love of God in our hearts which causes activity for him; saying *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”* And further, the Apostle Peter tells us to add to our faith structure, Christian character such as Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Love; that, by so doing, we shall have granted unto us an abundant entrance into God’s Kingdom. He says not a word about “service”; and emphasises the thought that Christian character is far more important and pleasing in God’s sight than all the service we can render.

It is also interesting to observe the close connection between St. Paul’s words on the subject of Christian work and the faith structure.

Jesus, also, in the closing verses of his Sermon on the Mount, said: *“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”* (Matt. 7. 24-27). The lesson that Jesus intended to convey is that the truths He taught them were not merely to be heard, but to be put into practice in their everyday lives, if they would have the favour of God.

Our Lord warns us against the mere hearing of his words, and not obediently receiving them into our hearts, and not conforming our lives thereto, by making them a part of our faith-structure. Such, our Lord says, are building upon the sand; such are not acting in accordance with our Lord’s instructions; such are unwise and certain to suffer loss in the time of storm. We are reminded, in this connection, that while God has committed to each one of his children the work of constructing a faith building and has lent his aid and providential care in the same, yet in another and much larger sense God is constructing a glorious edifice, the

“Temple of God”. The Tabernacle in the Wilderness, with its rough covering of badger skins, typified the Church in her humiliation while on this side of the veil, while the Temple, on the top of Mount Moriah, typified the Church in glory, and each individual child of God is referred to as a stone in preparation for that Temple. So, the Apostle says, that Christians, as living stones, are built up into him, a royal priesthood and a holy temple in the Lord. Following the various symbolisms of the Bible that refer to this matter, we find that this Temple, which God is erecting is, in other words, the Kingdom of God, the Divine Government, to whom will be committed the responsibility of the world’s future sovereignty. Therefore, throughout the Gospel Age, God’s Building, or Temple, has been in process of preparation, in the sense that the material, the stones, and so on, are being dug out of the quarry of this world, and are undergoing the hammering, shaping and polishing of God’s disciplinary providences, so that each one may take on the proper shape, and thus fit in the place designed by the Great Architect of that holy Temple.

Surely we are near the time for the finishing of this great Building of God, his Holy Temple; surely we are close to the time when the last of the Temple stones are receiving their polishing and finishing touches, and soon the Temple will be raised in the First Resurrection. The world’s great luminary, the Sun of Righteousness, “The Light of the World,” is brightening the eastern horizon. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. May the light of God shine in and on increasingly until his Church, whose foundation is the “Rock of Ages,” shall lift her head above the falling debris of earth’s decaying systems and bid defiance to the storm which shall sweep the world of its vain schemes and traditions—its houses of sand, its castles of air: its wood, hay and stubble, the fabrications of man—until the Church, now in the wilderness, shall be the Church in glory.

How are we building? Are we building on the “Rock of Ages”, by hearing and heeding our Lord’s instructions; or, are we building on the shifting sands by hearing and not conforming our lives thereto? And with what are we building? Are we building with the gold, silver and precious stones; or are we building with the wood, hay and stubble of human speculation and sophistry (false argument)? Let us consider well the material with which we are erecting our faith-structure, our character building, today!

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PRIESTLY GARMENTS

THERE is a remarkable confirmation, with reference to colour symbolisms found in the 28th chapter of Exodus. It concerns the garments of glory and beauty worn by the High Priest of Israel, and is of great interest to everyone begotten of God, who, like their Lord and Master, become members of the priestly order.(1 Peter 2; 9.)

Among the articles of apparel described, was a white embroidered coat of fine linen. This indicated the purity and perfection of the priesthood, while the embroidery of needlework signified those voluntary works of grace which had beautified Christian character. (Psalm 45: 14).

There was also a strip of fine linen, worn around the forehead and which indicated a mind enlightened and perfected by the pure word of Truth. Upon this was fixed a plate or crown of pure gold on which was engraved “HOLINESS TO THE LORD”—thus portraying that the crown of life had been attained and that the priest was now a king by Divine right—“a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec” (Rev. 2: 10, 26, 27; Heb.7: 17; Zech. 6: 12, 13).

Over the white linen coat was a blue robe, blue denoting faithfulness. There was also a fringe thereon of golden bells and pomegranates. This indicated, that an abundant fruitfulness will be the glorious outcome of the work of ministry. The pomegranates were consecutively blue, scarlet and purple in colour. This pointed out that faithfulness unto death had produced truly royal characteristics, which fact will be proclaimed to all as indicated by the golden bells. The most significant of all the garments was the ephod, which hung in two parts, back and front from the shoulders downwards partly covering the blue robe. It was made of gold, blue, scarlet, purple and white-linen threads interwoven together. Thus in a marvellous way the five colours are all brought unto use. Who can doubt the existence of a Father of infinite mercy and loving-kindness when all things are so perfectly harmonious to His plan and purpose. The colours are there to testify that the designs relative to the Priesthood have been duly fulfilled.

Attached to the ephod was a breastplate made of the same material, with



settings of gold into which were inserted twelve precious jewels, and upon which were engraven a name of one of the tribes of Israel. It was termed the Breastplate of Judgement and was worn over the heart, and was responsible for the Urim and the Thummim: which supernaturally denoted God's will relative to some important matter (Num. 27: 21; 1 Sam. 28. 6).

The apostle says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6: 2), hence we perceive how significant is the breastplate. "They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;" (Mal.3: 17).

Wondrous honour theirs to be enthroned as members of the royal priesthood, under the headship of Jesus Christ, to judge the whole world of mankind. Reasonably the work of judging will be stupendous and glorious. Hitherto mankind have been dealt with by cruel hands, but now—"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth...Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because He cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the LORD;...for His mercy endureth for ever" (1 Chron. 16: 31-34).

The first jewel of the breastplate was the ruby, upon which was engraven the name of Reuben. Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, and as such was constituted the chief of the family. This reminds us of God's firstborn, whom He gave to redeem the world. Marvellous still, the ruby itself indicates sacrifice; it is a red stone, containing the same colouring matter which makes red blood, namely oxide of iron.

As we survey the aptness and reasonableness of the divine symbols, we can enter most heartily in the spirit of the following poem.

THE EPHOD

Appealing to all the faithful minds,
Revealing of a love that binds,
Soft and true and beauty cleaving
As if made by angels weaving.
Wondrous mingling, touching ever
Blue and red which greet together
Purple; then white and shining gold.
Amazing truths they all unfold!
Every colour has its meaning,
Deeper thoughts from deeper gleaning;
And illumined-what a riddle?-
By the gems which don the middle.
There is a truth, we all believe it,
That the light which doth receive it,
That the Ephod's hues are given,
By the sun which shines from heaven.
Yea 'tis true, all saints believing,
That the Lord Himself is weaving,
Bringing out the world's dark history
To the light of His great mystery:
And as works of men diminish
Comes the grand and glorious finish-
When begin the Golden Ages,
Long foretold by seers and sages!

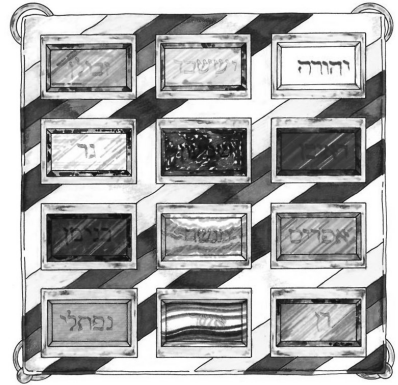


Illustration of the breastplate
attached to the Ephod

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The Joy of Jehovah Nehemiah 8.10

The joy of Jehovah is the jewel in the crown,
To what can I compare it—a gift of such renown;
It lifts me high above the clouds, to where the eagles soar,
How I long to have this gift, for now and evermore.

The joy of Jehovah is sweet balm for my soul,
It burns within my every bone, just like a fiery coal;
I feel like Jeremiah—I cannot hold it in!
Like new wine, it does not burst forth with such vigour and such vim!

The joy of Jehovah the world can never know,
A wondrous cup filled to the brim that truly overflows!
I praise and thank my Father for such a perfect prize,
That keeps his spirit flowing 'till I see him with my eyes!

'Where Eagles Gather' Rosemary Page

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

Part 2—On the Watchtower

Habakkuk's second message came to him after a time of waiting, a time spent on the "watch tower" in looking and listening for guidance and light. So it is with all who wish to know God's plans; it is necessary first that they come to a realisation of man's own folly and sin, that, to quote Paul in Romans 3. 12 "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" that men are held in the grip of evil powers and forces. But after there has been a time of quiet contemplation whilst this truth is sinking in there comes the assurance that things will not always be thus, that God is working to destroy the power of evil and that his judgments will certainly come upon the powers that have wrought evil. The theme of Habakkuk's second chapter is his realisation through his "watch tower" experience of the certainty of Divine retribution upon the evil forces of the world.

"I will stand upon my watch" he says, *"and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"* (Hab.2. 1)—more properly "what I shall say concerning my plea". The first requirement of prophetic insight is watchfulness. Those words allude to the watchmen of Israel, stationed on the city walls to perceive in advance the onset of untoward happenings, the approach of travellers, or the coming of dawn. "Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth" the Lord commanded Isaiah (Isa. 21. 6) and in obedience to that command the watchman looked and listened "diligently with much heed". It was in consequence of his watchfulness that he saw the evidences of the downfall of great Babylon, and—abruptly changing the picture—the merging of earth's long night of sin into the morning of Millennial day. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem" says the golden tongued prophet again (Isa. 62. 6-7) "which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence...till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth". It was in the inspiration of these words that Habakkuk took up his stand in patient waiting on the Lord for the answer to his "plea", the suit that he had brought before God. And it is important to note that he watched, not so much to learn what God would say "unto" him, in the words of the A.V. verse 1, but rather as in the margin, what God would say "in" him, that is, *through him to others*. It is the purpose of Divine revelation that it would

be passed on, and the prophet who by reason of patient watching has been entrusted with a knowledge of the Divine Plan is thereby obligated to make it known to those who need that knowledge. God will speak to men “*in*” him.

It was not a literal watch tower upon which Habakkuk took his stand. Like Daniel a little later, he was waiting upon God in prayer and supplication, perhaps in the silence of the desert, perhaps in the quietness of the Temple sanctuary, and because of his readiness to be the recipient of Divine Revelation, God was able to use him. “*And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry*”(Hab. 2. 2-3).

This is the first indication that Habakkuk’s prophecy reaches beyond his own people and time, and touches the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. The prophet is bidden to write down the vision for the benefit of later readers, for its fulfilment is not wholly in his own day but is also in the “appointed time”, an expression with which we are familiar in Daniel as betokening the day of Divine intervention for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. The message certainly did have a direct application in the prophet’s own day and was without doubt delivered orally to Israel at that time, but the writing down was equally evidently for the benefit of a future generation. “Now go” says the Lord to Isaiah (Isa. 30. 8 KJV margin) “write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, *that it may be for the latter day...*”. In these few words of God to Habakkuk we have evidence that a substantial part at least of the subsequent message is intended to apply to the day when God rises up to overthrow evil, and this conviction is heightened by the expression, later in the second chapter, to the effect that the earth is to be filled with Divine glory just as the waters fill the sea. That will not be fulfilled until the Kingdom is established.

The phrase “*that he may run that readeth it*” has to do with the ease or rapidity with which the enquirer may read that which has been written. Rotherham has it “that one may swiftly read it” and Leeser “that everyone

may read it fluently". The "tables" (*luach*) were clay tablets, used in Babylonia for writing material. The soft clay, inscribed, by means of a stylus, with characters known as "cuneiform" (arrow-shaped) was baked until hard, and was thereby rendered practically indestructible. It may not have been without design that Habakkuk was told to write on "*luach*", imperishable tablets, instead of "*sepher*", the usual Hebrew term for book; for "*sepher*" in Habakkuk's day referred to parchments written with ink, and perishable. No such parchments have survived to our day, whereas plenty of clay tablets have been recovered. Perhaps this is an indication that Habakkuk's message was, as it were, to be preserved in permanent form, for God had purposed that nearly three thousand years after he had uttered it, there would be readers waiting to "read it fluently".

In verse 3 the prophet is warned that there will be misunderstanding and disappointment over the apparent non-fulfilment of the prophecy. "*The vision is yet for an appointed time.*" The term is the same as that used in Daniel; "at the time appointed the end shall be" (Daniel 8.19). Further occurrences in the Old Testament indicate that a definite, preordained point of time is meant. Daniel was told several times that the full understanding of the vision could come only at the "time of the end", the time appointed for its fulfilment, and he was counselled to rest in patience for that day. This is the message to Habakkuk also: The two occurrences of "tarry" in verse 3 are two different Hebrew words, each having a distinct significance. The first means to linger or delay in coming, and the second to stay behind as though never to come. Thus the phrase is better rendered "though it *linger*, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not *fail to come*". To many in past days the vision has appeared to linger; the word comes to them as it did to those Israelites who complained in the days of Ezekiel that the days were prolonged and every vision had failed (Ezek. 12. 22-23) "thus saith the Lord GOD;...the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision". So it is in these days when the Kingdom is imminent: for the message of the hour is "*though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come*".

The first clause of verse 4 "*his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him*" is rather obscure. It breaks the sense of the passage. There is a suggestion that it refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian invaders, contrasting him with Habakkuk, the just man who is living by

his faith. The Septuagint gives a different thought altogether, one that is more in harmony with the context, and the fact that it is the Septuagint that is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews in Heb. 10. 37-38 gives this rendering an added authority. *It runs *“though he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come, and will not tarry. If he should draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him; but the just shall live by faith in me. But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, shall not finish anything.”* etc. Here, surely is a picture of the man who, because the vision has apparently “tarried”, draws back and walks no more with him (John 6. 66), and on account of that failure God no longer has “pleasure” in him. The just man, the one who does not lose faith, goes onward and into life because of that faith and in the strength of that faith. It is his faith in the unseen things that sustains him when there is nothing seen that can give confidence. This understanding of the text is the one adopted in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a passage so stirring in its exhortation and so adaptable to this present time in which we live, a time when the vision has apparently tarried and yet is now about to be fulfilled, as to deserve quoting in full:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have donethe will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Heb.10.35-39)

Those words are redolent of supreme confidence, a confidence so well founded, so unshakeable that it stands in the New Testament as does the prophecy of Habakkuk in the Old, a beacon light shining to dispel the shades of doubt. The hope of the Messianic Age, when Messiah would reign as King over redeemed Israel and through them enlighten the nations, was the hope of every Israelite in the centuries between Habakkuk and Christ, and led many to be “in expectation” at the time of the First Advent. That hope was not fulfilled just as they expected. “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” asked the disciples with rapidly fading hope as they realised that He was about to ascend to heaven and leave them (Acts 1.6). The hope of the Millennial

Age, when Christ would reign over all the earth, and through his glorified Church in the heavens as well through restored and purified Israel on earth, not only enlighten but convert and reconcile to God “whosoever will” (Rev. 22. 17) of all nations was the hope of every member of the early Church from Apostolic times up to the close of the third century. But “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:” (Prov.13.12) and when the failure of their chronological understanding in the fourth and fifth centuries revealed that the longed-for earthly Kingdom was not yet to be, there were many who did cast away their confidence. Although they had “done the will of God” they were not able to wait with patience for the fulfilment of the promise. So it was that the churches of that day began to listen ever more closely to men who belittled the glorious promise of an earthly restitution of all things, men who made light of the Divine calling of this Age to Christian discipleship in preparation for the administrative and missionary work of the next, and degraded the teaching of Jesus to an impassioned exhortation to “flee from the wrath to come”. Their highest conception of Christian teaching was a call to escape the terrors of hell and achieve the blessings of heaven, a purely personal salvation.

Today we have come back to the apostolic principles and we know that God is, in this Age, setting a premium upon faith. His purpose stands firm, his promise is sure, and in his own due time this earth will be filled with his glory. It is our part as disciples to hold fast to that conviction and wait in quiet assurance that the tarrying One will surely come. And by that faith men shall live.

The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans shows the intimate connection between faith and the revelation of God’s righteousness, and quotes Habakkuk’s words to support his argument. The revelation of that righteousness, he says, is “out of” faith, in consequence of faith, and it is “in order to” faith, it leads on to further faith (Rom. 1.17) “*as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’*”. The epistle to the Romans is a progressive enlargement of this dominant theme; **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH!** Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4.3) and so are we, *if we believe* (4.24). By this avenue we come to a condition of freedom from condemnation and acceptance with God (5. 2) leading on by full surrender to Christ, to baptism into his death and a rising to walk with him in newness of life (Chap. 6). So the fleshly mind passes away and the

spiritual mind takes control and we are joined forever to the company of Christ's brethren (chap. 8). From that position Paul goes on to show that Israel after the flesh must also tread the same path, leading to full acceptance with God, and in their turn live, by faith (chap. 9 to 11). So comes that great crisis in the outworking of God's Plan when "all Israel" has been saved through faith, and is ready to embark upon its pre-destined mission of enlightening the nations, who in their turn, during the Millennial Age, are also to be saved through faith. And it is precisely that climax in the affairs of Israel to which Habakkuk's prophecy also points. Where Paul perceived the culmination by means of theological reasoning, his predecessor saw it in prophetic vision.

* * *

Now even at this point Habakkuk was not quite ready to have the vision of the future revealed to him. God must now acquaint his mind with the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil. What a man soweth, that shall he reap. Consequently the remainder of chapter 2 is taken up by a "song of taunting", to use the Hebrew expression, in which the sin of Babylon and the corresponding retribution is set out in five-fold form. That is the theme of our next instalment; and after that comes the great prophecy of the Last Days.

Ascribe greatness

Ascribe greatness to our God the rock,
His work is perfect and all His ways are just
A God of faithfulness and without injustice;
good and upright is He.

Mission Praise 40

These are the words of Don Moen, singer and songwriter and appear to come from the following verses in the Old Testament.

Deut. 32.3-4 (ESV)

For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God!
"The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.

FROM FUTILITY TO HOPE FROM DEATH TO LIFE

(The Goodness of God and Forgiveness without Punishment)

Romans 8:20 *“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope.”* (NKJV)

A Futile Existence

Consider what this means the creation subjected to futility and not willingly. There must be a reason why God has set it in futility. Could it be to learn the consequences of sin? The world today and from the beginning of time without the Lord Jesus is futile. Take Jesus out of the equation and we have a futile existence with no future for mankind. The world today is without, a hope beyond the grave. Life becomes futile as the years pass by; we are born to die; from the moment we are born we are dying. We experience childhood, teen years, maturity, middle age leading into old age. We may not be fortunate enough to see old age. Life holds many trials no matter what stage of life one is at, but as the years advance, the ageing process a downward spiral, gives no hope for better days to come with no hope beyond the grave. Some are happy to die because the future is so bleak. This is a reality of life.

The Deterioration into Sin

Without the Lord Jesus and God's love the downward spiral of mankind continues. God introduces us to the deterioration into sin in Romans chapter one....

Rom. 1:22-31 *“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all*

unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful”; Verse 32 “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them”. (NKJV)

“Those who practice such things are deserving of death” other translations say “worthy of death”. We are all deserving of death for our own sins. But to be deserving of death is not sentenced to death. That has already taken place by the sin of Adam. This is a succinct difference for consideration. To God sin is sin! (The first innocent sin led to death.) The confirmation comes in Romans 3: 10, *“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’.”* Also Rom 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* And 1 John 1:10 *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (NKJV)*

Hope in Christ Jesus

We would go out of existence without Jesus , *“for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive”*. (1 Cor. 15.22 NKJV) It can be seen from the first half of that scripture all die. God has set it this way “not willingly” but of necessity to learn the consequences of sin. (Rom. 8.20) The enormity of the billions of sins placed on Jesus’ shoulders; no wonder he sweated blood. The whole creation depended on that defining moment in time 2,000 years ago which drew a line in the sand. We moved from death to life and from futility to hope. God also “subjected it in hope”. (That is the second part of Romans 8:20.) John the Baptist said *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”*. (John 1.29 NKJV) So it is not just the sin of Adam but the whole world.

There is a Hope that goes beyond the grave. The believer in Christ Jesus looks beyond the grave and so as the twilight years come upon us, as the ageing process takes hold, as the years become shorter, as the infirmities of this life weaken our bodies the hope set before us grows stronger. A time is coming for a world without pain, without ageing and without death. Our hope appears magnified by the futility of this life. Therefore,

we are *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Heb. 12.2 NKJV)

Calling out

Today the nations still walk in their own ways (Acts 14.16). But God made a dramatic change. Simon (Peter) declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Act 15.14). The ‘people for His name’ are to bring this hope to life. These are the first fruits. Therefore we have been snatched from futility to a hope beyond the grave. This is by grace. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8 NKJV). This is something worthy of deep appreciation.

We are blessed to enter the present stage that God has purposed. John 6:44(NIV) tells us now that *“no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them”* and then that he *“will raise them up at the last day”*. This is a privilege and responsibility. Matt. 22:14(NKJV) *“many are called, but few are chosen.”* Matt. 7:13(NKJV) *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction”*. When we accept we have been taken from death to life in Jesus then in a sense we have been separated from the world, who at this present time reside in death. Those that are called, chosen and faithful will be instrumental in reconciling the world to God. (2 Cor. 5:19)

Paul asks us if we appreciate God’s goodness *“or do we despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance?”* (Romans 2.4) That ‘goodness of God’ goes far beyond this present age. It is that goodness that will bring billions back to Him.

Sin Not Imputed

Romans 5:13(NKJV) *“For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law”*. Other versions use the words of that where there is no law we are not “held to account” or “not charged against anyone”. The law was only given to Moses at Sinai and for 1,500 hundred years Israel was under law. There was no law before this all the way back

to Adam and all those nations outside Israel were not under law, including all those people today who have never been under law. Less than 1% of the whole human race have ever been under law. Therefore, 99.1% of the human race God has not imputed or charged to their account any punishment.

You may disagree with the interpretation of Romans 5:13 to mean they are not held to account or sin is not imputed therefore meaning “no punishment”. Where is a punishing God? We have to be careful not to see with the natural eye which sees punishment but with the spiritual eye and see love and chastisement. (Fortunately God has passed over all our sins.) For if there was a punishment for sin we would be in fear of God like Israel was when the law was given. The Israelites said to Moses you speak with God, as they feared God. Does God beat people into submission? Has he beaten us into submission? Or is it His kindness and love that wins the Church over having taken you from futility to hope and from death to life?

Another question to consider is, did Jesus die for all sin or some and not others? Jesus died for all the sins committed by Adam’s race, including our own sins. God does not hold sin to anyone’s account as Jesus died for all sins—past, present and future, even for the most evil and wicked whether or not they are called at this time. What about Sodom and Gomorrah? Jesus said in Matt. 11:24 (NIV) *“But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”* And in Matt. 10:15 (NKJV) *“Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”* Sodom was not under law. Their sin will not be held to account. It’s the same for Hitler and the like. If we differentiate, we may be despising *“the riches of His goodness”* (Romans 2.4). Therefore we ought to be very careful before making rash judgments against our fellow men.

Forgiveness

Consider the Parable in Luke 7: 40-43 *“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ So he said, ‘Teacher, say it.’ ‘There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of*

them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged’.” Is Jesus talking about God’s forgiveness to the bigger sinner?

2 Corinthians 5:19(NIV) confirms God’s goodness *“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”* This clearly states God was not counting their sins against them and that He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, *“what manner of persons ought we to be”* (2 Peter 3: 11). Work on oneself first to see clearly what God is teaching. God is holding no one to account for sin! Matt. 7:5 (NIV) *“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

Jesus said “forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Can we find it in our heart to forgive the sinner? There is a good reason why we should. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3(NIV) *“Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”* Do we see through God’s eyes? God shows His love and mercy and understands our natures providing in His Son Jesus everything necessary to bring one to repentance.

Chastisement Not Punishment

The world does not understand God’s chastisement yet. Chastisement is not punishment. When we read some scriptures, especially in Revelation it might appear to the natural man as punishment. To those that have been called it should be seen as chastisement to bring the world to reconciliation? A hurtful, spiteful God does not exist. We have been blessed, now, to understand the mystery hidden from the creation of the world. In Ephesians 1:9-10(NIV) *“he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ”*. It is God’s work and by God’s grace we understand the mystery and know we have been moved from FUTILITY to HOPE, from DEATH to LIFE. When Jesus appears

the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the water covers the sea. Isa 11:9 (KJV) *“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”*.

God’s goodness, mercy and love will overturn wickedness and evil. Having allowed sin to run its course for 6,000 years to the extremity of evil conjured up in the most debauched mind, God will establish a precedent that not the slightest transgression will ever be allowed again, to safeguard the future everlasting life. When a sinner comes to consider the futile existence that leads to death, they will repent, not because of punishment, because they see the goodness and love of God. Mankind will see the blessings extended to us in this “evil” age, the goodness of God that led to our faith and faithfulness. 1 John 5:4 (NKJV) *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith”*. It is “our faith” that overcomes the world.

One of the major tests of our faith and trust in God is to see God’s love in the sinner and to be able to look at the most evil person and see God’s love. But for the grace of God there go any of us. The world is like an abused child, not knowing why or what for. No one would punish an abused child to win its love but by showing the child love. The more love the child gets, the more it wants to do good. God will not hurt anyone to bring them to repentance, which is why God chastises and not punishes.

WJT

The Stone the Builders Rejected

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. (Psalm 118.22 NASB)

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know: Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38.4-7 NASB)

ESAU THE EARTHLY MINDED

Known in Biblical history as the man who sold his Divine birthright for a mess of pottage, Esau has never enjoyed what in these modern days is called a “good press”. His earthly-mindedness and casual indifference to the things of God, compared with the reverence and faith of his twin brother Jacob, and the fact that his descendants, grown into a nation, became inveterate enemies of Israel and eventually subject to Divine condemnation, has created a prejudice against Esau which perhaps has failed to give due weight to what may be at least some redeeming features in his character.

The story goes back to the time immediately before his birth; his mother Rebekah was given intimation from God as to his purpose with the soon-to-be-born twins. Both were to be the father of nations, but the first-born was to be subservient to the second. Since Rebekah and Isaac knew that the Divine promise of the coming “seed” that was to bless all the families of the earth was involved in the imminent birth of these two, they must have realised that in his wisdom the Lord had decreed that the promise should be fulfilled in the second-born. At this point, as Paul observes in the Epistle to the Romans, the children had not yet been born. The Lord’s selection could not have been on the basis of manifested fitness for his calling. And yet in the outcome it is seen that God decreed rightly, for Jacob had that within him which made him a believing follower of the Lord whereas Esau, despite certain likeable characteristics, remained to the end of his days the perfect example of the man who has not the smallest spark of religious feeling or reverence in his makeup. As a man of the world he lived, and as he lived, so he died. Who knows but that God, with insight seeing deeper than man, already perceived which of these two developing infants had that mixture of qualities derived from the paternal line of Abraham and the maternal one of Nahor which would best befitted for the Divine calling which must come to one of them. That, at any rate, might be a more logical explanation than a capricious and arbitrary selection having no rhyme nor reason.

The lads grew up together and their differing characters and temperaments soon became manifest. Jacob, we are told was “*a plain man, dwelling in tents*”. Here the word rendered “plain” really means sincere, upright,

whole, in a strictly moral sense. His life was spent with flocks and herds like his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham. Like them, in that condition he learned of the things of God and the special responsibility his family line held in the developing purpose of God. Esau, on the other hand, was “*a skilful hunter, a man of the field*”. Not for him the patient day-by-day routine of cattle rearing and care; for him the wide open spaces and the distant mountains, where he could range and hunt to his heart’s content. And so the two grew to manhood.

At some time in these early years occurred the incident which is well-known in the story of Esau. Coming in one day weary and hungry from hunting, he found Jacob sitting down to a meal of savoury red beans (“pottage” in the A.V.) and impulsively asked that he might share it. Jacob, for all his uprightness, was an astute man and a bit of a schemer, and he had evidently been thinking about the position which would arise when their father went the way of all flesh. His mother had told him—and probably Esau also—that he was to be the heir of the Abrahamic promise but how much notice would Esau take of that if he then decided he would like to assume the obligation after all? And suppose that Isaac, with his known partiality for Esau, should confer his patriarchal blessing at the end upon his elder son instead of his younger, despite what he knew of the Divine edict? So Jacob determined to strengthen his position by obtaining from his brother a formal renunciation of any rights he might possess in the matter. He proposed that in return for the immediate satisfaction of his hunger Esau should cede to him his birthright as principal heir to Isaac. It was a disproportionate and altogether absurd exchange for so small an immediate favour, but Esau’s reaction was typical of the man. “I am going to die anyway” he said “and what profit shall this birthright be to me?” The honour of being a progenitor of the nation that would in future times be the custodian of the Divine oracles, and an instrument for the blessing of all peoples of earth, meant nothing to Esau. “I shall be dead by then, and what good will it be to me in that case” was his sentiment. There was no appeal in the idea of being used by God for the happiness of others; he lived only for himself. Neither did he seem to be unduly concerned about the heir to Isaac’s estate; he evidently did not fancy the life of a cattle raiser and was much happier on his hunting forays. So he quite willingly relinquished all his claims as chief heir to his younger brother, content in the thought that when the time came he would get the usual younger

brother's share instead and Jacob would have all the responsibilities and all the obligations. Jacob, careful as ever, got him to swear to his word, which Esau with his usual affability was quite ready to do; and sat down to enjoy his dinner.

The first intimation of the coming rift in the family appeared when they were both forty years of age. Esau married. That in itself was not unusual and was probably beginning to be expected. His father Isaac had married at forty and was now a hundred years of age; probably he was hoping to see grandsons before his time came and have that assurance that the Divine purpose through his family was not going to be frustrated. What was unusual was that Esau flouted the family custom of marrying within the Semitic clan of Terah, a measure intended to maintain racial purity in God's sight, and chose instead to take to himself two women of the Hittites; Judith, the daughter of Beerî, and Adah or Bashemath the daughter of Elon. The Hittites were a powerful Indo-Aryan nation in the north and many of them were settled in Canaan and on friendly terms with the people of Abraham—but they were not of Shem, not Semitic at all. They were of Japheth and from Abraham's and Isaac's point of view unfit for alliance with the people of the Lord. There is not much doubt that Isaac remonstrated with his eldest son at this betrayal of the family principle but equally no doubt that Esau quite casually dismissed his father's objections as of no consequence and proceeded with his plans. The Genesis account merely remarks briefly that the situation was "*a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah*".

One is tempted to wonder if Isaac was to some extent blameworthy. The narrative declares that "*Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob*". They both knew that God had ordained that Jacob should be the heir of promise to carry on the family obligation to God but it does look as though Isaac had a special regard for Esau, influenced by the material advantage of good living afforded by his son's hunting exploits, and maybe had "spoiled" him somewhat so that Esau failed to grow up "in the nurture and fear of the Lord" as did Jacob at the hands of his mother. Isaac may have experienced a feeling of dashed hopes when he had to stand by helplessly and see his beloved eldest son cut himself off from the people of the Lord by his alliance with these two women of the land.

Seventeen years later came the crisis which jolted Esau out of his easy-going placidity and disrupted the family. Isaac was beginning to feel his age—he was now a hundred and seventeen years old and nearly blind—and he felt the time had come to confer his patriarchal blessing upon his heir so that there could be no dispute after his death. Unaccountably his choice fell upon Esau; he knew full well that Jacob was the Divinely appointed heir but again his predilection for his eldest son led him to ignore the fact. Esau was bidden to take his huntsman's gear, go out into the wilderness and bring back choice venison wherewith to serve his father at a formal feast, during which Isaac would confer his blessing. Had Esau been a man of integrity he would have told his father about the bargain he had made with Jacob seventeen years before, but he did not. He may very well have forgotten the incident or not considered it a serious matter; at any rate he went off to find his venison.

Rebekah overheard the conversation, and determined to frustrate her husband's purpose. She may have justified her conduct to herself by reflecting that she was ensuring that the Lord's intention was carried out, not realising that He needs no shady actions by his devotees to assist the accomplishment of his purposes. At any rate Jacob, following her instructions, impersonated his brother before the blind Isaac, bringing to the feast goat's flesh from the flock, and so received the blessing intended for Esau.

Esau returned from his hunting, prepared his feast, and took it to his father, to the latter's consternation when he realised how he had been tricked. There seems to have been a real bond of affection between these two; Esau's distress in the narrative clearly is not on account of the loss of material things but of the fact that the blessing intended for him had been given to another. *"He cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, my father"*. Sadly came the reply *"Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing"* to which Esau responded bitterly *"he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and now he hath taken away my blessing"* and then comes a heartfelt plea *"Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"* Heavily upon his soul fell the words *"I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants....and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?"* Desperately, hoping against hope, Esau pleaded *"Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me, also, O my*

father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept". So, Isaac gave him a secondary blessing; he should live by the sword, but he should receive of the richness of the earth and one day should be freed from the dominion of his brother. And Esau went out from his father's presence bitter and resentful.

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for this man at this time. His nature, admittedly earthly and having no feeling after God, was relatively simple and trusting, and he had been outwitted by a smarter man. It is not likely that any prospect of winning Esau to a better feeling of reverence for God was improved by this conduct on the part of the brother who did profess faith in God. His normal attitude of good-humoured tolerance changed to one of angry animosity and as he stormed off to his hunting he vowed that so soon as his father was dead he would have his revenge and kill his brother. He made no secret of his intentions—he was not the sort to do so—and the news got round to his mother. Jacob was hustled off to his mother's brother at Padan-Aram four hundred miles to the north until the trouble blew over, but once there he in turn was out-smarted by an even wiler man and it was forty years before he got home again. The Divine law of retribution is very well exemplified in the life of Jacob.

One of the consequences of this incident was Esau's third marriage. Isaac had urged Jacob to find himself a wife from among his cousins at Padan-Aram, of the posterity of Nahor, brother of Abraham, again to preserve the purity of blood of those in the line of the "seed of promise". Esau, learning of this injunction, and painfully conscious of the disapproval his own marriage to the two Hittite women had earned, decided to do something to make amends, or at any rate to please his father. He took, as a third wife, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, son of Abraham and half-brother to Isaac. This gave him at least one wife of the chosen family but whether this earned him any approval from his father is not recorded. It seems more likely that Isaac had reconciled himself to the fact that his elder son would never be the "heir of promise".

Now sixty years of age, Esau had three wives and a growing family of children to support. It is evident that something more than prowess with bow and arrow was going to be needed and from allusions pertaining to later dates in his life it is clear that he began to settle down to a certain amount of stock-raising and farming although his free-ranging hunting

habits with companions of like mind continued and there could be some suspicion of banditry on a small scale. There is not much doubt that he was an opportunist and snatched a living where he could. At some time during the forty years that Jacob was serving Laban away in Padan-Aram Esau formed an alliance with the tribe of Seir the Horite (known to archaeologists nowadays as the Hurrians, a people occupying various parts of the Middle East in very early days) and began to extend his business interests into the land of Seir, south-east of Canaan. Probably to aid the furtherance of those same business interests, he now contracted marriage No. 4, to Aholibamah daughter of Anah the Horite and great-grand-daughter of Seir the founder of the tribe. Since the Horites were also an Indo-Aryan race like the Hittites it would seem that Esau's sudden passion for marriage within the clan which led him to take Ishmael's daughter had as quickly evaporated. His interests and connections were now much more closely intertwined with the family of Seir than they were with those of Abraham; the lure of the things of this world had drawn him completely away from the worship and the people of God.

During the years of Jacob's absence Esau seems to have maintained his home and family and farmlands in Canaan, probably not far from his father's territory, but himself to have spent a great deal of time in the land of Seir (Edom) a hundred miles away, to which he was becoming more and more attracted. The ancient trade route from Arabia to the north passed through his land so that he might well have been involved in profitable trading activities; copper mining was carried on in the south of the land and he may have had a hand in this also. From Gen. 36. 6 it is apparent that by the time of Jacob's return he had become a wealthy and influential man; the fact that he had four hundred horsemen at his beck and call in Seir is an indication of that.

Thus passed forty years, that were filled with activity, years of growth and increase. Esau now had five sons and probably as many daughters; his possessions might have equalled or even exceeded those of his father Isaac, and the old disputes with his brother Jacob of so long ago were probably quite forgotten. Then one day there appeared at his dwelling in Seir a party of messengers from Jacob.

How Jacob knew that his brother was now living in Seir does not emerge in the Genesis account. Since Esau did not go there until after Jacob's journey to Padan-Aram it is clear that there must have been some communication with the old home in Canaan during the intervening time and that Jacob knew in at least a general way what was going on. The newcomers brought a message from Jacob that he was on his way home from Padan-Aram with great possessions "*and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in thy sight*". This was very conciliatory language coming from the man who by virtue of the birthright occupied the senior position in the family; it is evident that Jacob was in a state of apprehension as to Esau's attitude to him. He still remembered the threat of forty years before. His apprehension was considerably increased when the messengers returned with the alarming news that Esau himself was on the way to meet him accompanied by four hundred men. "*Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed*"; he betook himself immediately to God in prayer for deliverance, and arising from prayer, added an additional insurance by sending in advance of his company a handsome present of some six hundred head of assorted cattle and sheep wherewith to mollify the feared avenger.

He need not have worried. The Esau who met him was the old Esau, bluff, matter-of-fact, and carefree. The matters of the birthright and the filched blessing might never have happened. This was his long-absent brother Jacob and he was glad to see him. "*And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept*"; Esau with genuine emotion, Jacob also with not a little relief. It was going to be all right after all. Then Esau saw Jacob's four wives and their score or so of children and asked "who are these with thee?" "*The children which God hath graciously given thy servant*" was the reply and they came forward to present themselves. This did not hold his interest for very long and he turned to another subject. "*What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?*"; Jacob, feeling himself now on surer ground, apprised him that those were a present "*to find grace in the sight of my lord*". It is here that the latent generosity of Esau's character is revealed. He wanted no present. "*I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast to thyself*". It is a warm expression, warm with deeper sincerity than anything else that was said at that memorable meeting. Esau was glad to see his brother; he bore no ill-will for the past, and he was quite satisfied

with their relative positions and wanted nothing that was Jacob's. It is true that Jacob demurred and pressed for his acceptance of the present, and at last Esau consented and took the cattle, but the impression given by the narrative is that he was not greatly concerned either way and accepted only for the sake of peace and quietness.

"So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir" and the life he had carved out for himself, a life without God but one with which he was perfectly satisfied. Jacob went on in to Canaan and his destiny, a destiny that was to involve the creation of the nation of Israel, custodian of the Divine revelation, and the coming of the man Christ Jesus the Light of the world. About such things Esau knew nothing and cared nothing. He closed down his interests in Canaan, became the dominant figure in Seir, so much so that that its name was changed to Edom, the generic name of the tribe and later nation which had its origin in Esau.

He appears once more in the story. Isaac died twenty years later *"being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him"*. In the record of the last respects to their father the historian has recognised that Esau was the eldest and took precedence; so his name comes first. The last glimpse we have of the brothers together is one of amity.

Of Esau's death there is no mention. He was a hundred and twenty years old at the death of his father. A normal life span at the time was anything up to a hundred and fifty. Jacob died in Egypt at a hundred and forty seven. The last we see of Esau is still in Seir. Ten years later Jacob and his household went down into Egypt and when the nation of Israel which sprang from him came back four centuries later the sons of Esau had themselves grown into a nation. There was no enmity in Esau at the last. Despite his irreligiousness, his complete indifference to heavenly things and his disregard of the Divine calling centred upon his family line, he did at least in his easy-going generosity exhibit the Christian virtue of returning good for evil when he made that spontaneous response to Jacob's proffered peace-offering; *"I have enough, my brother. Keep that thou hast to thyself."*

AOH

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Chapter 5—Reformation begun

Many are the lines of thought carried over from Old Testament days into the Gospel story to teach the need for a holy life. Indeed, for the Church of Christ, since Pentecost, the need for a deeper sense of holiness has been more pronounced, for the simple reason that the day of types and shadows has given place to the day of realities. Concerning many of the items of the Aaronic system of ceremony and services the Epistle to the Hebrews says that they were “*imposed...until the time of reformation*” (Heb. 9. 10). This time of reformation has no connection with the period of church history covering the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries of our era, but is located in the apostolic days. Moreover it is not Church reformation which is thus indicated, but Israel’s reformation. The first of the great realities being come—in the person of our Lord Jesus, that is, a new and better High Priest being come with the first of the better sacrifices, God began to reform and remould the instrument He designed to use in accomplishing world deliverance from sin. This reformation is intended eventually to affect the whole regathered nation of Israel, when their days of scattering are over, and when they are ready to enter into a new and better Covenant with their waiting, long-suffering God. The clay which was once marred in the hand of the Potter will be moulded again another vessel as it will seem good to the Potter to mould it. (Jer. 18. 4).

In preparation for that great day the great Master-craftsman has been reforming and remoulding the Priesthood. This is the first stage of God’s Reformation, and the whole of this Gospel Age has been set aside for it. It began by the supersession and removal of the Aaronic House of Priests and in the installation of the Christian priesthood (Heb. 9. 12-15). One feature of this Reformation was that the principle of taking one whole tribe (with its further division into Levites and priests), was abolished, and the earlier system of counting the first-born as the family’s priestly member, was reintroduced—but on the higher spiritual level. This priestly privilege was the firstborn’s true relationship to the rest of the family at the time that the Old Law Covenant was made, and this relationship is to be restored in readiness for the establishment of the New and better Covenant. In harmony with this thought we find that the first-fruits unto God (the first-born class, the 144,000 of Rev. 14. 3.) are not represented

as coming from Levi alone, but as though gathered from all the tribes of Israel. (Rev. 7. 4-8) This is in keeping also with the thought in Hebrews that the followers of the Lord Jesus are called “the Church of the first-born” (Heb. 12. 23). This is in accord, too, with the position in Egypt, when the destroying Angel spared the life of every first-born sheltering beneath blood-sprinkled lintels, irrespective of tribal lineage. The first-borns of every tribe alike were in danger that fearful night, and in their “passing over” they were hallowed unto the Lord.

A further feature of this reformation was that the essential things belonging to the new day were to be “real”, not shadowy. It would not now be enough to follow a course of ritual and ceremony, no matter how elaborate the ordinance may be. Instead of “incense, beaten small”, the odour and fragrance of a consecrated life would be acceptable through Christ to God (2 Cor. 2. 15), The blood of bulls and goats was no longer acceptable to God. Thus the whole system vested in Aaron and “his house” which endured from Sinai till Jesus came, was swept away, and the whole nation for whom they served was set aside to wait until the reformation of the “First-born” should be complete. When the first-born class has been made complete the remainder of the Israel family will be brought in (*“All Israel shall be saved.”* Rom. 11. 26) and be formed anew—reformed—and made another vessel, as it will seem good to the Potter to make it.

If then God spake so earnestly to the “shadow” priesthood of Israel, beseeching them to walk before Him in such holiness as was then possible, with how much greater emphasis has God spoken to the Christian Church to walk worthily before Him, perfecting holiness in His sight, from day to day. How greatly He desires that they shall shape their lives so that His Will in them shall have free course! How ardently He wants the innate qualities of His own great heart to be reproduced in them, so that they can be the first and chief portion of that long-purposed Seed, through which His Love can flow to heal the sin-sick nations of the earth. *“Be ye holy - for I am holy,”*—how intensely these words reflect the longing of Almighty God!

What is this holiness? What does it mean to be a saint? Does it denote a state of easy recognition to one and all? Do worldly minds understand it

when it is in their presence? Do even Christian minds realise what it means? Does it mean the cultivation of a “goody-goody”, sentimental “holier-than-thou” attitude among men? Does it require the wearing of distinctive dress, or the possession of some special title? Can the Church make saints at will? Holiness is a word usually associated with religious life and experience. We have an equivalent in the word “Saintliness”. Our modern English word “*Holy*” comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, “*Hal*”. *Holiness* comes from a kindred word—“*Halig*”. In the less-developed language of our forefathers’ day these words did not have the almost exclusively religious meaning which the modern word has, but were applied to various physical and mundane things too. We have several kindred words today which spring from the same roots. One such “*hel*”—a word denoting good sound health. Another such is “*hell*”—to make sound or well. Still another is “*whole*”—(or “wholly”) meaning “entire”, “complete”, “nothing lacking”.

Our modern word “Saint” comes from the Latin “*Sanctus*”, and means “one set apart”—i.e., one wholly devoted to a purpose, usually a religious purpose. The words “Holy”, “Holiness” and “Hallow” (used instead of hofify) and “Saintly”, “Sanctification” and “Sanctify” are synonyms for each other respectively, and stand, almost without exception, in our English Bible, as the equivalents of one Hebrew word (*Qadash* or *Qodesh*) in the Old Testament and one Greek word (*Hagios*) in the New Testament. How accurately the Greek “*Hagios*” corresponds to the Hebrew “*Qadash*” may be seen by the fact that the Septuagint translation (a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) uses that word exclusively to pass over into the Greek tongue the old Hebrew thought of holiness. This is of great advantage to us, and helps us to carry forward Old Testament thought into New Testament days. It affords us additional advantage also to have two sets of English words by which to define that ancient Hebrew thought.

Holiness is usually taken to mean sinlessness, undefiledness—an equivalent thought to absolute purity. Under present conditions this can mean different things to different men, according to the creedal conceptions employed. For instance, some Christians believe they have not sinned for months and years. They claim to have kept unbroken all the ten commandments. They claim to have forborn to steal, to lie, to covet,

etc..., and on this ground claim sinlessness of life—i.e., they thus advance a claim to holiness. All Christians do not agree to this claim because they do not accept that definition of holiness.

Others, mindful of their sins, confess them freely, and while telling of God's forgiving grace, strive to promote feelings of deep emotion, leading to tears of contrition or songs of praise. The flow of deep emotion is understood by them to be a state of deepening holiness—a deepening of heartfelt revulsion for sin, and appreciation of unattained purity. True holiness is neither the one nor the other of these states. To seek to attain to holiness by keeping the ten commandments constitutes a “throwback” to the Jewish Age. It tells of retrogression to the lowly Israelitish level, to an attempted holiness of the flesh, and shows that the would-be observer of such commandments is in bondage to the “letter” of a law. It seeks to attain “subjective” holiness at the very low level of the “types” and like Israel, it obtains not what it seeketh for. It forgets that Israel was not made sinless by keeping those commands, but was accounted so by the shedding of blood. Cleansing blood, not works, is the primary essential to holiness among men.

Another body of Christian thought fails to take holiness at its proper value, and dwells, with tears, upon its desperate and perverse unholiness—and of its constant need for grace and mercy. It lives the Christian life on its penitential side alone. It dwells in one room only of the Christian's abiding-place, forgetful or unknowing that the house is large and wide. Repentance unto tears, in proper place is right; but repentance is not the whole of the Christian's life and standing.

Holiness in man begins first with God. It is a standing-ground before God conferred by Him for a purpose. Of His own Will, God took Abraham's seed to be His people, notwithstanding their defects. By His own hand He separated them from other men—and that not for their deserts but to serve His own designs. This was the first step in their sanctification and arose purely out of His grace.

This is where holiness begins in the Christian's life. Of His own Will God still takes hold of Abraham's seed, but in these days it is a spiritual seed, and God takes them notwithstanding their defects. Again it is not for their

deserts, but purely of His grace—to serve His own designs.

Delivered through the Red Sea, God next offered terms of cooperation and service. He gave them statutes and commandments to educate and advance them, the observance of which, had they been taken to heart, would have refined and elevated them high above the nations around. By slow degrees this would have wrought a change of heart in them—akin to that evinced by those rarer souls outlined in Hebrews 11,—and taught them a love for their neighbour nations within the spirit of that gracious promise which told of a blessing for all the families of the earth. Especially should this have been accomplished in the priestly tribe, who had been called into such close association with the holiest things.

God offers to the responsive believer in His Son “*If ye will...then...*” (Matt. 16. 24-27). But now the terms mean sacrifice and submission to His Will. It is not enough to have been separated from a world of sin. Separation “from” must be followed by separation “to”. Having left the world, it is necessary to live with God, walking thus with God, the Word of Truth made active by His Spirit’s power will work a change within. The inborn taint of sin will need to be removed, and as God adds grace to grace, the heart will be healed and made sound and whole; made ready for the resurrection change when that which is perfect will be come.

Thus the holiness which begins in us objectively—that is with God’s great object in view—comes to completeness by the healing (or *haling*) of the sanctified believer’s heart. The grace that invited and accepted us to co-operate in the achievement of its plans will win our heart’s most loyal compliance, till our own hearts beat with the spirit of that great purpose. The love that won us from the ways of sin, so that through us it may win a world from sin, can so infill our hearts with its own radiant warmth, that we shall ardently desire only those things which God desires. Holiness in us means Godlikeness and Christlikeness, co-operating with God and Christ in the fulfilment of His plans.

This twofold aspect of holiness runs through many New Testament Scriptures, exactly as it did throughout Old Testament records. Let us note a few passages first which speak of holiness from without—holiness

coming through a channel outside ourselves.

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...sanctification...” (1 Cor. 1. 30).

“...such were some of you: but...ye are sanctified...in the name of the Lord Jesus...” (1 Cor. 6. 11).

“...both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” (Heb. 2. 11).

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Heb. 3. 1).

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ...” (Heb. 10. 10).

“...the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified...” (Heb. 10. 29).

“...that he might sanctify the people with His own blood”. (Heb. 13. 12).

We then have another list of Scriptures which show the vital necessity for the inward change of heart.

“...yield your members servants of righteousness unto holiness.” (Rom. 6. 19).

“...and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.” (Rom. 6. 22).

“let us cleanse ourselves...perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7. 1).

“Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. 12. 14).

These Scriptures will suffice as a sample of their kind to show the absolute necessity of that growth in grace and Godlikeness which is characterised as subjective holiness—holiness within.

Thus far, then, God’s reforming work has gone. That which was shadowed forth by linen robes and holy ground and sacred instruments stands forth on its higher plane as purity of heart and life—a love for all that is right and true, balanced by hatred for all that is sinful and wrong. And because God’s great objective is to set up for evermore the right and overthrow the wrong, each day the consecrated believer lives he grows more ardently desirous of working together with God to accomplish His great design.

TH

PALM TREE *Phoenix dactylifera*

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree.” (Psalm 92.12)

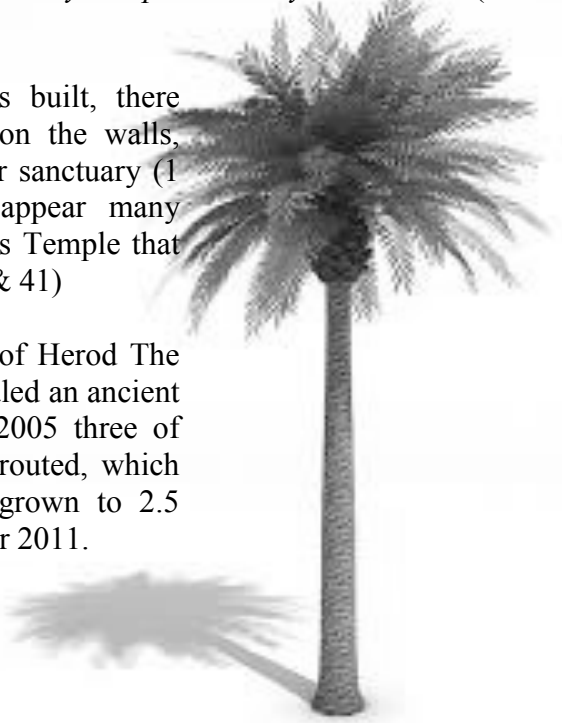
Palms used to be plentiful in Palestine as they are in Egypt. There was a seven mile long grove of palms near Jericho, the ‘city of palms’, in the days of Josephus in the first century and also the Jordan valley was covered with date palms, which could grow up to 100 feet high.

For the Jews it had a practical and symbolic significance. Its Hebrew name *tamar* symbolized grace and elegance and it was also a girl’s name. One of David’s daughters was called so as was one of Judah’s daughters-in-law (Gen. 38.6 & Ruth 4.12). It provided starch, sugar, oil, wax and fruit, and mats could be made from its leaves and the fibres could be used to make paper and thread. The fruit of the date palm is rich in minerals and vitamins such as potassium and iron. When it was found growing in the desert, it indicated the presence of water. The Israelites, on the journey from Egypt, *“came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters”* (Exo. 15.27 NKJV).

When Solomon’s Temple was built, there were carvings of palm trees on the walls, entrance and doors of the inner sanctuary (1 Kings 6.29-35). Palm trees appear many times in the details of Ezekiel’s Temple that has never been built.(Ezek. 40 & 41)

During the 1960s excavations of Herod The Great’s palace on Masada revealed an ancient jar with date palm seeds. In 2005 three of them were planted and one sprouted, which as stated by Wikipedia, had grown to 2.5 metres in height as of November 2011.

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My Prayer

Oh, Jehovah-
Let me be of your kingdom please,
Not for me, a life of ease,
Nor the devil e'en to please,
Into his mould, he would me squeeze,
My soul he so much wants to seize,
But him, I'd never want to please,
Hear me Oh, Jehovah



Oh, Jehovah-
Let me be of your kingdom reign,
Far away from tears and pain,
And all that points to mankind's shame,
No more blind and dumb and lame,
Satan gone—no more to blame,
So glad I am, that Christ he came,
To remove all sinners stain,
I have not fought the fight in vain,
So hope-full-y I will remain,
Hear me-Oh, Jehovah.

Oh, Jehovah-
Let me be of your Kingdom great,
For I know it won't be late,
Great Baby-lon will meet her fate,
Gone will be all those you hate,
I'm thankful I stayed from her gate,
And that on you I've learned to wait,
Your glory yet I will relate,
In truth I will not hesitate,
Oh hear me—please, Jehovah.

‘Where Eagles Gather’ Rosemary Page

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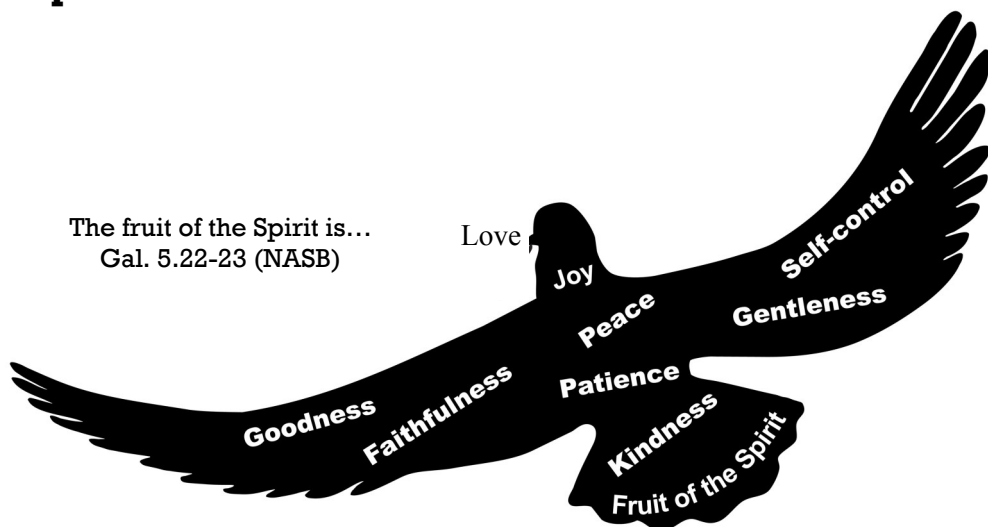
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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Volume 91 Issue 5

September/October 2014

The fruit of the Spirit is...
Gal. 5.22-23 (NASB)



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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 looks for the 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)

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It is supported entirely by the gifts of its readers, and these are sincerely appreciated.

Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

David Cameron said that 'Britons should be more confident about its status as a Christian country' according to the Daily Mail on 16 April 2014. But in what should we as Christians in this 21st Century have confidence?

David trusted in the Lord and was delivered from his enemies. Even Eli had confidence, despite his and his sons failings, when he said, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good". (1 Sam. 3.18)

The Lord is our confidence as he was back in Old Testament times (Prov. 3.26) . This is still so, in this day and age and we can come before him with confidence as we believe He is the only true God who hears our prayers and answers them. Therefore we can with confidence place ourselves into his hands, knowing that he knows what is best for us.

The scriptures indicate that we should not place our confidence in princes (Psalm 118.9) or other leaders or in our own capabilities (Phil. 3.3-4).

More than just leaving our individual lives as new creatures in his hands, we can leave the world in His hands knowing He is in charge and will ultimately bring the long-promised Kingdom to this earth in due time.

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LOVE

Love is Divine. True love I mean,
The love that is often unseen
The love that gives, enriches. Bless.
The love that lifts men from distress
Love is pure, reaches far beyond
Joy. And its accompanying ills.
Love reaches holy heights, and dwells
In dwellings poor, and prison cells
Beside the sickbed love is found
In tenderness, and soothing hands
Tis borne on angel wings and flies
To many shores, and unknown lands



PG

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UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace....till we all come in the unity of the faith....unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4.3-13).

The picture in Ephesians 4 is that of Christian growth, from the condition of “babes in Christ” to that of full Christian maturity (but, even so, not the perfection of character which is to be ours beyond the Veil. Eph. 4 has to do entirely with this life and not the next). Right at the outset immature believers are exhorted to “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*” and an essential part of this “walking worthy” is the “endeavouring” to keep the unity of the Spirit. As a help to our efforts in this connection we are reminded that there is one Body—one Spirit—one hope of our calling—one Lord—one faith—one baptism—one God. In all these we share as brethren, and we all have the same basis upon which we stand. Our abilities may and do differ, and so does our capacity for understanding the deep things of God’s Word, and this will in turn affect our understanding of doctrine or modify the viewpoint we take, but “*to every one of us is given grace (favour) according to the measure of the gift of Christ*”. He proportioned his gifts according to our capacity for receiving and making use of them and as we are able to make use of more because of our growth in grace so He gives us more. Thus for the instruction and upbuilding of the one-time “babes” He has given, as the Apostle says here, “helps” of all kinds, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers in order that these same growing Christians, having attained Christian maturity, should come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ and so become what he calls a “*perfect (complete) man,...the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*”.

Now this unity of faith into which such a mature Christian has entered is not, as so many imagine it to be, merely a unity of assent to various points of doctrine, although an understanding of the great Bible doctrines concerning sin and death, redemption and life, the High Calling and mankind’s destiny is a necessary factor in the attainment of that unity. But this unity of the faith is really the final fruitage of which the unity of the Spirit is the original seed. Unity of the Spirit is based upon our fellowship with each other and our belief in Jesus and his words; the unity

of the faith is built upon our fellowship with God and our knowledge of him and his laws. The first can be entered into comparatively quickly, so soon as we come into Christ and meet with his people; the second is the result of long years spent in “growing up into him in all things”. The one is therefore clearly a development from the other, but even when we have entered into the unity of the faith, and attained the full stature of a man in Christ, we are still like Paul, knowing only in part, seeing as in a glass, darkly. The day has yet to come—and it will not come this side the Veil—when, especially in matters of doctrine, we attain full perfection of understanding. That need not hinder our unity now; in fact, according to Eph. 4, if our unity now is hindered by any such consideration, if we allow ourselves to be carried hither and thither by every “wind of doctrine”, never attaining, if we do not play our part in the oneness of the Body, then, implies the Apostle, we are still children. And although in one sense it is as children that we inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, it is not so in this sense. As children in innocence, sincerity, humility, teachableness, yes, but as immature babes as yet unable to manifest the character likeness to Christ which is an indispensable condition, by no means. This life is our training ground and until we have been proved fitted and qualified for the stupendous work of God which awaits all who are called and chosen, but also faithful, we cannot expect to hear the momentous words “*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*”.

JOY



Tis joy to those who daily tread.
The Way of mercy. Truth, And love.
Tis joy to those who daily seek.
Help, and Strength from the Lord above.
Tis joy to those who pray and find.
From Him the Saviour of mankind.
Courage, blessing day by day.
Helping them in the narrow Way.

PG

PURPLE

PURPLE is a sign of royalty. Monarchs have used it to this end throughout all ages. Even before Israel was instituted a kingdom, we read of “purple raiment,” which belonged to the kings of Midian (Judges 8 :26). The world, however, has yet to realise the deep significance of this colour, for it reveals that the great Eternal has been pleased to use quite simple means to indicate a great truth.

It takes two primary colours to produce purple, namely blue and red. Thus true royalty is portrayed by this remarkable emblem, proclaiming silently yet effectively the merit of King-ship—faithfulness unto death.

The analogy is still more emphasised by the fact that the dye was extracted from a specie of mollusc, or small shell fish, found upon the shores of certain parts of the Mediterranean, especially that of ancient Tyre. Thus it required the death of multitudes of these tiny organisms to produce purple, the scarcity of the dye made precious in the sight of men (Luke 16 : 19).

Coming to the Scriptural analogy, we are aware that practically all who have died have merited death. But we ask, has any sinless and loyal individual gone down into death ? In answer, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, comes to mind. “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2: 5-6). It was He who mingled, as it were, blue with red, thus meriting the wearing of purple. He alone rules by divine right, as indicated by the words. “Yet have I anointed my King upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2: 6 Margin).

The value of this sacrifice cannot be measured. Suffice to know that over twenty billion human beings await His royal ministry, through which they all will be blessed in ways too wonderful for words.

The closing scenes of Our Lord’s career whilst upon this earth, demonstrates that He had in mind the glorious results arising from his submission unto death. The time came when He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. He well knew what it meant, but there must be no turning

back. Then came the Passover supper, the lamb of which had been picturing His sacrifice for two thousand years. His arrest soon followed His agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

Eventually He came before Pilate, who asked him *“Art thou a King?”* To this Jesus replied, *“Thou sayest, to this end I was born and for this cause came I into the world.”* Soon after this the Roman soldiers saw their opportunity to exemplify their brutality—“Here is a King!” they cried in mockery. Then they clothed Him in purple, and pressing upon His head a crown of terrible thorns, they bowed low, “Hail, King of the Jews!” These cruel men were unaware that they were beholding the only one worthy of that honoured title as befittingly tokened by the purple robe. The only charge and sentence that proved effective, was His claim to royalty. This was written upon the cross in three languages, “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS” (John 19 : 19). Thus died the greatest of all heroes. Thank God, He lives as a monarch, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government...there shall be no end” (Isa. 9 : 6, 7). Jesus will be the King of the Jews as well as of all mankind. “Life from the dead,” is promised when Israel is favoured again (Rom. 11: 15).

Associated with Jesus are other members of the Royal family, who have been selected and trained since Pentecost. These, likewise, have entered into His sufferings, and have been faithful unto death, thereby symbolically mingling “blue with red.”

Their triumphant faith was foreshadowed by Daniel, who always served God in the integrity of his heart. His temptations were severe because he was surrounded by religionists of every shade of thought, hence the term Babylon—babel, which means confusion. To him the true God was all-in-all, and the Adversary, in consequence, inspired his devotees to anger and malice. The great Creator continually demonstrated His powers of protection and loving-kindness, even though it meant special miracles being wrought on Daniel’s behalf. Precious are the words, “O Daniel,...greatly beloved,...peace be unto thee” (Dan. 10: 11, 19).

When very old he was found in the midst of the besieged city. Suddenly, he was in frantic demand. King Belshazzar, the dissolute monarch, was in abject fear, owing to some large and miraculous handwriting, which had appeared upon the wall within his palace. No heathenish priest could interpret, and Daniel was remembered. The King would give much to relieve the tension of his mind. He offered a great reward to whosoever would faithfully interpret the message. This was to take the form of purple clothing, a golden chain, and a rulership of the third degree. Daniel saw at a glance the meaning of the strange writing, and there and then pronounced the immediate doom of Babylon. In vain hope that their action may appease the angry Monarch of the Universe, they immediately thrust the rewards upon God's servant, but it was of no avail, that very night Babylon fell and Belshazzar was slain. It is interesting to note that Daniel maintained his honours in the new government under the Medes and Persians.

It will yet be revealed that somewhere upon this earth there is a similar class of individuals. They, like Daniel, place God at the pinnacle of all their affairs, and it is farthest from their thoughts to worship Him through any other channel or medium save that of Jesus Christ. To them the clashing and jarring creeds of Christendom have no attraction, it is babel—confusion. They see the handwriting of Jehovah God pronouncing the doom of mystic Babylon (Rev. 18: 1-5), and which will soon give place to the kingdom of Our Lord and Saviour. They who are brave and fearless will “dare to be a Daniel,” and in due course become partakers of the royal priesthood, as signified by the wearing of purple (1 Peter 2: 9). They will also have the chain of precious promises divinely linked up in glorious fulfilment (2 Peter 1: 4), and they will be rulers in the third degree and reign over the whole earth to bless and give life to all mankind (Rev. 20: 1-6). In other words they will cause life, health and happiness to germinate to the world now dead in trespasses and sins. This reminds us of some interesting new facts, relative to those exceedingly small wavelengths of aether which comprise the violet end of the spectrum. During the winter months vegetation is largely at a stand-still. Then comes the spring, a period when sunlight becomes rich in violet and ultra-violet actinic rays. These easily penetrate the seeds and the heart of vegetation, causing germination and re-awakening. This is indeed a wonderful natural phenomenon of divine ordering (Gen. 8: 22). We are reminded of God's royal family, whose office is firstly to raise and quicken the dead. Then

comes the summer time, when sunlight becomes rich in the central yellow portion of the spectrum; this is required by the plants for growth and health of flower and fruit. Thus a further emblem is noted! The golden rays of blessing and encouragement proceeding from the Divine family will comfort and cheer every heart, causing them to develop the fruits of righteousness. In autumn time sunlight again undergoes a change, for the red end of the spectrum becomes dominant. These warm rays cause the harvest fruit to ripen into maturity. Thus at the close of Christ's reign the world of mankind will be ripened into glorious perfection. They will then thank God their Father in the fullest possible measure for His amazing grace, centred in the sacrifice of His dear Son.

FL

PEACE - THE LOVE OF SILENCE



There is a place in consciousness
Withdrawn from all the rush
That lies as listening and still
As some clear morning hush.

As silent as the waiting ear
Of some shell treasured long,
Whose rosy walls cannot forget
The ocean's ancient song.

As silent as the lips of leaves
Before the breeze begins,
Or as the soundless pause that breaks
Before the violins.

For all things have their melodies,
And all that lives must sing.
Yet there is silence at the core,
Like some bird's folded wing.

A feathered nest God makes for rest,
Lined soft as thistledown,
Where we can wrap the folds of peace
About us like a gown.

And lean against the heart of love
That beats within the soul,
And listen to the pulse of God,
And hear the ages roll.

Elizabeth Landeweer
Songs of the Nightingale

HABAKKUK-PROPHET OF FAITH

Part 3—What a man soweth

Habakkuk had now been brought to a realisation of the fundamental causes underlying human distress, man's own sinful, fallen condition, and of the way of escape therefrom, repentance and justification through faith. The details of the process of reconciliation could not yet be revealed; that had to wait for the advent of Jesus, but sufficient was given the prophet to show him that God had devised a way, that the oppression and injustice from which his soul revolted would not endure for ever. Now God had something else to show him, the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. That law is as true in the case of nations as in individuals, a lesson that needs to be brought home today and indeed is being brought home to those who have regard to the significance of current events. And in order to impress this lesson with all the sharpness it required, the Holy Spirit cast it in the mould of a "taunt-song", a form of poetic composition in which the Hebrews excelled. One of the earliest "taunt-songs" is that of Miriam the sister of Moses, composed to rejoice over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exo. 15). This one in Habakkuk is directed primarily against the Babylonians, exulting over their coming fall, in veiled language touching upon the great moments in their history when their arrogance and opposition to God's holiness was thrown up in sharp relief, dwelling upon the "poetic justice" of the retribution that was surely coming upon them at the hands of the Persians. But the taunt-song has a wider scope of application than that, for its principles also fit the greater world system which, built on the same basis as Babylon of old, has by reason of its greater magnitude and extent infinitely excelled the empire of Nebuchadnezzar in the weight of its oppression and the cruelty of its yoke. And that greater system also must fall with the weight of its own corruption, perishing in the fires of retribution which follow inevitably upon the filling up the full measure of its evil course, to be succeeded by the glorious Kingdom of Christ in which the hand of the oppressor will be felt no more. The terms of this taunt-song, framed at first to fit the Babylon of Habakkuk's day, can be suited very easily to this present world order in which we live.

"Shall not all these take up a parable against him (Babylon), and a taunting proverb against him, and say, WOE to him that increaseth that

which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges.” (Hab. 2. 6 R.V.). This is the first of the five “woes” of the song, each describing one outstanding sin of Babylon. Here it is the sin of usury, consistently condemned in the Scriptures. Much of the distress of our modern world is due to the place of usury in its financial system, and the opportunity thus given the unscrupulous to exploit the needy and defenceless. In the case of Babylon the prevalence and practice of usury is known to go right back to the beginning of the city’s existence, prior to the time of Abraham. In Habakkuk’s day Babylon was the centre and controlling power of the world’s commerce and trade. But “*shall they not rise up suddenly that bite thee*”, cries Habakkuk, “*and thou shalt be for booties unto them?*” (vs. 7 R.V.). The Persians were destined to destroy Babylon’s usurious practices, and Babylon, that had preyed for so long on others, would in turn become the prey of others. “*Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee;*” (vs. 8). Babylon steadily declined in commercial importance after its capture by Cyrus, its trade being transferred in later days to the new city of Seleucia on the Tigris, and it never recovered its place among the nations.

The second “woe” may very well contain a veiled allusion to Babylon’s first great crime against God, the building of the great Tower from which God might be defied (Gen. 11). “*WOE to him that gaineth an evil (dishonest) gain to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil (calamity – Moffatt)*” (vs. 9). The word for “nest” denotes an eagle’s or other bird’s nest set high up in the crags of the rocks, and also any kind of sanctuary or abiding place built on high. Speaking to Edom, God says “though thou exalt...thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down” (Obad. 4) and to Bozrah “though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence” (Jer. 49. 16). Those godless men of early times set out to build a tower whose top should scale the heavens; they would challenge God in his own realm. Men are doing that today, and the fate of their work will be as catastrophic as was that of their predecessors. In Daniel’s time, the tower, still standing, enlarged and beautified by almost every successive king since its erection, was crowned with a golden sanctuary dedicated to the Babylonian god Bel, the god to whom was devoted the treasure looted by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple (see Dan. 1. 2). The literal Bel has been destroyed as was prophesied of him (Jer. 51. 44, Isa. 46. 1); and his modern counterpart is fast meeting the same fate.

“WOE to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity” (Hab. 2. 12). That is an apt description of the building of great Babylon, one of the mightiest cities the world has ever seen, largely in the blood and tears of the helpless captives taken from other lands, its gigantic walls, magnificent palaces and stately temples monuments of oppression and iniquity. WOE to it all, cries Habakkuk, for it will all come to naught. *“Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour for (Heb.) the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity (nothing)? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (vs. 13-14). In other words, man has erected this great edifice of evil on the misery and sorrow of his fellows; and when it is completed the Lord will sweep it away as by fire and the labour will have been for nothing, for it is the Divine intention to fill the earth with Divine glory, a glory which will brook neither sorrow nor sighing, neither unhappiness nor pain, but demands that the former things shall pass away (Rev. 21. 4). So *“Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons,...without an inhabitant”* (Jer. 51. 37). Today, the Baghdad-Basra railway crosses a wind swept waste of broken brickwork and heaps of rubble, inhabited only by jackals and scorpions, all that is left of proud Babylon. That is a flitting picture of the end of this world. The rule of unrighteousness will perish, and the evil that man has created be swept away, as God arises to *“turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent”* (Zeph. 3. 8-9). In the midst of the darkness and gloom of these five woes, with their dark recapitulation of human sin this fourteenth verse shines like a beam of light piercing the storm clouds. It is an assertion of the inflexible Divine purpose that cannot be frustrated. The earth *shall* be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—a universal, world-wide knowledge of the glorious gospel of Christ, the ultimate fruit of the work of the Millennial Age.

“WOE unto him that giveth his neighbour drink...and makest him drunken also” (vs. 15). It was literal intemperance and drunkenness that marked and contributed to the final capture of Babylon by the forces of Cyrus. The carousal at Belshazzar’s feast, when the aged Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall as spelling the doom of Babylon, is well known. When the Persians laid siege to the city they effected an easy entrance because the whole city had been given over to feasting and debauchery. In a metaphorical sense Babylon had made all the nations drunken by seducing

them into the worship of her own system of brute force, in much the same way that present-day materialism is seducing the people more and more away from true religious faith and belief. Both then and today the prophet's words are true: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken...of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. 51. 7). It was during their captivity in Babylon that the Jews, before that time mainly a pastoral people, learned the arts of trade and acquired the financial acumen for which they have since become famous—or notorious. They too have been intoxicated by the influence of Babylon. Today all the nations partake of the same "mixed wine" and in their intoxicated condition cannot see that this vast edifice of greed and gain has come at last to the point where the judgment of this woe will be executed, and that without remedy.

"For the violence done to Lebanon shall return upon thee and the slaughter of beasts shall terrify thee." (vs. 17). This is the literal meaning of the verse. The cedars of Lebanon, so ruthlessly cut down by the invaders (see Isa. 14. 4-8) are poetically used as a symbol of God's people; there will be a dual judgment upon great Babylon, retribution for the violence done to the saints of God (Rev. 16. 6) and a great destruction of earthly evil powers, the "wild beasts" of the earth, which, in their fall, will involve in ruin the entire evil system which is symbolic termed "Babylon the Great" (Rev. 17. 5,16).

The final woe is a sentence upon idolatry. Babylon, by means of her power and ruthlessness, first intoxicated the nations and then led them into idolatry, the worship of the created thing rather than the Creator. *"What profiteth the graven image...the molten image...dumb idols?"* cries Habakkuk. *"WOE unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it"* (vs. 18-19). There is a modern counterpart to all this. Men today have set up science as a god, a god of their own creating, a god to which they devote all their powers and wealth, laying it over with silver and gold, and saying to it, "Arise—it shall teach!" And the prophet scornfully regards their handiwork and says "there is no breath at all in the midst of it". Though all people in the world bow down before the image they have made and cry to it for deliverance from their distresses, there will be no answer. "They bear him upon the shoulder" says Isaiah "they carry him, and set him in his place, and he

standeth. . . one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble” (Isa. 46. 7). So it was with Babylon, and so will it be at the end of this Age. Men will plan and put into execution all their schemes and devices for bringing peace and prosperity to the earth without God and without righteousness, and all their endeavours will fail, because there is no breath at all in the midst of them. There can be no peace without righteousness, no righteousness without morality, no morality without Divine law—despite all that the “moderns” say to the contrary—and no Divine law without the Holy Spirit, the “breath” which is of God to inspire and vivify. It is when all these plans have utterly failed to bring about any deliverance in the earth that God’s time will come, and He will intervene in his own way to establish lasting peace amongst men.

And so Habakkuk, comforted and reassured by this revelation of Divine judgment impending over the oppressors of his people, looked up into the heavens and saw the beginnings of a new and marvellous revelation. The darkness was rapidly giving place to an effulgent golden glory. Like Elihu in the days of Job, suddenly perceiving in the heavens a light that he had never seen before (Job 37. 21-22), and Isaiah, waiting to be used of God, beholding the wondrous vision of the throne (Isa. 6. 1), so now Habakkuk, realising at last that evil shall not always flourish but that the time of the dispensation of evil is known to, and fixed by, the Almighty, looked up into the skies and saw the temple of God open in heaven, and the Lord seated upon his throne with his attendant angels around him; and in the glory of that vision cried out in exultation “*The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him*” (vs. 20).

And in his fervour of soul he bowed himself before that great sight and waited in silent reverence for the vision of the End Time that God, by his Spirit, was about to show him.

* * *

Sin—justification—retribution. These three great truths had to be seen in their true relationship to each other before the necessity and nature of the Time of Trouble could be rightly understood. Now comes the great prophecy which shows God arising to perform his “strange work”.

AOH

QUIET TIME–FAITH, HOPE, LOVE

Hebrews 10:22-24 (KJV) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (KJV) Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (KJV) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

Romans 5:1-5 (KJV) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

DAY BY DAY, HOUR BY HOUR

“God broke our years to hours and days
That, hour by hour and day by day,
Just going on a little way,
We might be able all along
To keep quite strong.
Should all weight of life
Laid across our shoulders, and the future,
rife
With woe and struggle, meet us face to face

LONG-SUFFERING

At just one place,
We could not go.
Our feet would stop: and so
God lays a little on us every day.
And never, I believe, on all the way
Will burdens bear so deep,
Or pathway lie so threatening and so steep
But we can go, if by God’s power
We only bear the burden of the hour



Selected

O PERFECT LOVE, ALL HUMAN THOUGHT TRANSCENDING

O perfect Love, all human thought transcending,
Lowly we kneel in prayer before Thy throne,
That theirs may be the love which knows no ending,
Whom thou for evermore dost join in one.

O perfect Life, be Thou their full assurance
Of tender charity and steadfast faith,
Of patient hope, and quiet, brave endurance,
With childlike trust that fears nor pain nor death.

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife;
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
That dawns upon eternal love and life.

These are the words of Dorothy Gurney (1858—1932) written for the marriage of her sister in 1883. According to hymnary.org, it was arranged into an anthem by J. Barnby for the 1889 wedding of Princess Louise of Wales to her paternal cousin the Duke of Fife. Hence one can see how it has been labelled a wedding hymn.

The texts that appear to have inspired these words are as follows;
Genesis 2:24 (KJV) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,
and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not
unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he
shall direct thy paths.

Isaiah 55:8 (KJV) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your
ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Matthew 19:4-6 (KJV) And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not
read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall
cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are
no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let

not man put asunder.

John 14:26 (NKJV) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 17:23 (KJV) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

1 Cor. 13:12-13(KJV) For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

2 Cor. 13:11 (KJV) Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Ephesians 3:17,20 (KJV) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

Ephesians 5:21,22,25,31 (KJV) Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

1 John 4:12 (KJV) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

NAC

THE FRUIT OF UNFAILING LOVE

“I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest...” (Jer.2.2-3 RSV).

In picture language, Jeremiah is able to speak for one moment of the faithful and obedient bride of Exodus 19.8. When the covenant was made at the foot of the mountain, Israel was the virgin bride of her God. Before they even left the sanctuary of Sinai, they had broken their bond with the Lord in the worst possible form. They worshipped an idol.

The history of Israel is a record of disobedience and weakness. There are wonderful times of repentance and victory when God was able to work through his people. These were all too brief and too rare. From the day they left Egypt, Israel was frequently rebellious. Hosea speaks painfully of this in chapter 11. vs. 1-2 (RSV). *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me...”* Hosea’s prophecy is based on his own experience; the relationship between God and his people is reflected in the broken marriage of Hosea and Gomer. The prophet changes the picture in chapter 11. Israel is shown as the little child who is being brought up by a tender father. But the pointed lesson of the prophet’s words has not changed. That lesson comes to us afresh in the New Testament in Jesus’ parable of the “Prodigal Son”. It is the theme of the whole Word of God; it is the record of a Father’s unfailing love. There is a Hebrew word used in the Old Testament which is difficult to translate into one English word. It occurs about 250 times and is usually translated in the Authorised Version by the word ‘mercy’ and occasionally by ‘kindness’. But these words do not fully convey the idea which describes God’s attitude to his people. It is a quality of character which is not often expressed in human behaviour. Yet it is part of the very nature of God and He longs to see it developed in the lives of his people.

The Revised Standard Version is very helpful because it almost always translates the Hebrew word *‘chesed’* as ‘steadfast love’. This is much nearer to the real meaning of the Hebrew and is useful because we can readily identify the Hebrew idea when we come across it in the Old Testament. The word originally meant ‘keenness’ or ‘eagerness’.

Although it has related words in Arabic, these were never developed in the same way as ‘chesed’ was in the Hebrew.

The word is linked to the idea of covenant and may be described as ‘covenant love’. It is a word which can relate to human friendship and is so used in 1 Samuel 20. 14 concerning David and Jonathan. Their friendship became a classic in history. It was no ordinary friendship. They might have been bitter rivals for the throne. Whether or not they pondered the situation of Jonathan dying and leaving a family at the mercy of the new king we do not know. They made a covenant with each other which would ensure the safety of their descendants. It was normal for the triumphant new royal family to destroy all possible rivals from the dynasty which had been ousted. Saul’s family were liquidated except for Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth.

The words of the covenant are recorded in 1 Sam. 20. 14-15 *“If I am still alive, show me the loyal love (chesed) of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your loyalty from my house for ever.”* (RSV). Relationships between members of the nation of Israel involved the covenant which they made with their God. To break the covenant between each other was to break the covenant with God.

David was faithful to the covenant with Jonathan. He searched for a descendant of Jonathan (2 Sam. 9. 3). In 2 Sam. 21.7 (RSV) we are told that *“the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul’s son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD which was between them...”* In 2 Sam. 10. 1-2 there is another interesting use of ‘chesed’ which is mutually expressed between David and the neighbouring Ammonite king. David was willing to extend that covenant friendship to the royal son. When Hanun failed to reciprocate the good will he broke the covenant and the enmity was then very bitter. As with the Gibeonites, it was not unknown for a covenant to exist between the people of Israel and their Gentile neighbours. No ill would come of it providing Israel remained faithful to the Lord.

The writings of David also provide us with further insights into the use of ‘covenant love’ and this is particularly so in Psalm 25. Using the Revised Standard Version it will be noted that ‘steadfast love’ appears in verses 6, 7 and 10. The whole of the psalm is dealing with the covenant, graphical-

ly describing the friendship of God with his people.

There is a further revelation of God's relationship to his people in Psalm 89 (RSV), which opens with the words "*I will sing of thy steadfast love, O LORD, for ever...*" Israel believed what God had said and felt secure that a descendant of David would always sit on David's throne whatever they did. They imitated the worship and destructive behaviour of the surrounding nations. God therefore allowed Israel to feel the discipline of their enemies' oppression, because of his faithful love. They went into exile. God could survive without Israel. They could not survive without him. God had made a covenant with Israel and for his part it would be kept. Israel was brought back to the land of the Promise.

At their return from Exile the Law and its interpretations took God's place. Israel believed that to keep the law was all that was needed to express their loyal love for God. They went to fanatical lengths to keep that law. But their attitude killed the Lord of glory. The 'facts' of the covenant became more important than the relationship itself. The 'marriage lines' became more important than the subsequent marriage. Except for such great men of God as Jeremiah, Israel did not cherish that relationship—they did not know God.

Perhaps the most important part of the definition of '*chesed*' is the faithfulness of God's love. That is unbreakable. Human love can be very emotional and express itself in physical terms. It can appear to be strong and beautiful. Yet it is well described in Hosea 6. 4 as being like the morning cloud and the early dew. It rapidly evaporates. Two verses further on we have the passage which Jesus quoted, recorded in Matt. 9. 13. God did not want formal ritual but the everlasting love of his people; for himself and for each other. "*I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*" (Hosea 6.6 RSV) God's love for Israel was unbreakable. Israel might be unfaithful to the covenant but God could not. In spite of all they did, God remained faithful to them and some of them remained faithful to him.

This 'covenant love' exists within the framework of the relationship between God and his people now, the followers of the Lord Jesus. It is part of the more comprehensive word 'grace'. Although 'grace' has a

more extensive meaning than 'chesed' it contains the same idea of everlasting faithful love.

It is possible for the Church of God to suffer from the same illusion as Israel of old. They placed the ritual of sacrifice and the minute keeping of the Law before their great and loving God himself. So with many who claim to follow Jesus. The understanding of God's Word, the revelation of his purposes, has become more important than the close bond between themselves and their God. Such an attitude wrecks the real relationship with God and is unfruitful however pious and knowledgeable Christians appear to be.

The surety of our covenant is with God. No matter what experience a Christian passes through, he can be absolutely sure that God will be faithful. He will never leave us nor forsake us. His love is really strong and beautiful. And He will express that love most fully in the moments of greatest pain and trial. Our relationship with God must rise above everything in our lives and it must remain firm and strong. We can put it at risk. From God's side of the partnership He will always be the solid rock on which we can utterly depend.

AOH



GENTLENESS

There is nothing as strong as true gentleness or as gentle as true strength. It is only imperfection that is not tolerant of what is imperfect.

GOODNESS

A saint is one who makes goodness look attractive.

There's no limit to how much good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit.

Deep Waters and a Bubbling Brook



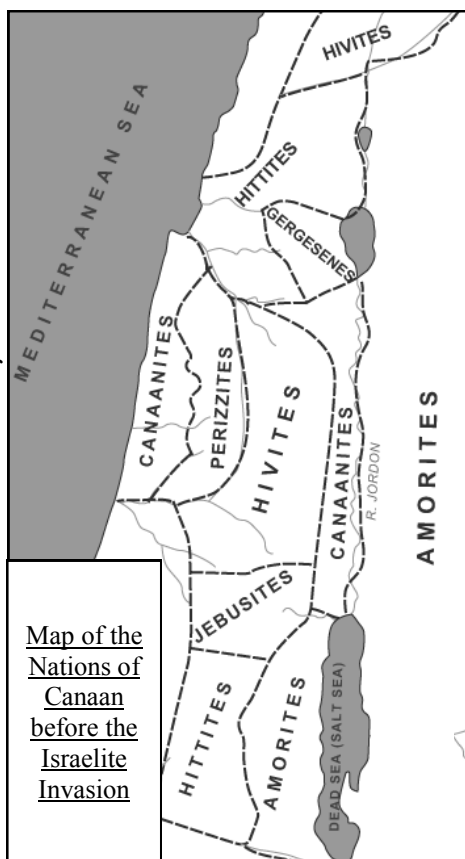
THE SEVEN ENEMIES OF ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND

After Joshua became leader the new generation of Israel entered in to the new land of Canaan as our Lord promised. God gave them an important commandment “When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons”. (Deut. 7:1-3 NIV)

First we can examine the types of enemies there were in Promised Land. Ancient peoples had a simple approach to their names. They would call people by an obvious trait like their character, tradition or occupations. These seven nations had significant reasons for their names enabling Israel to identify their enemy and find how to beat them (or defeat them) and we can do the same.

Researchers explain the meaning of those nations;

HITTITES - This name means terror. They were giants who brought fear, confusion and discouragement to others. This is our enemy too because as spiritual Israelites we should only fear God and not anything other than God and not man. Proverbs 29:25 (NIV) says “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe”.



GIRGASHITES - The meaning of the word “Girgashite” is as one who returns back from a pilgrimage. Therefore, they are people that go back and are earthly. They build their houses using clay which shows they are not stable in their mind-set. This is our enemy too because we have to be stable in our faith always based on Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 28:16 (ESV), “Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’...”

AMORITES. They were people who were arrogant and boastful in their speech, who were always challenging. They had high self-esteem and this pride led to finding fault in others. This is our enemy too because God is the only judge. So, if we judge others then we will also be arrogant before God. Proverbs 8:13 (NIV) says “To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech.”

CANAANITES. This name means merchants who humiliate. They were financial giants. The Canaanites were motivated by greed and lust for the accumulation of earthly and material wealth. This is our enemy too as we can't serve two masters and this world's possessions are temporary. James 4.4 (NIV) says “You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

PERIZZITES. They were people who had separated themselves and lived in unprotected, unwallled villages. They had no discipline and restrictions. This is our enemy because we have to completely surrender ourselves to God's commandments. Proverbs 25:28 (NIV) says “Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.”

HIVITES. They claimed to offer a good lifestyle, living by phrases such as “if it feels good do it”, “don't worry what other people think” and “look out for number one”. They lived a very luxurious life. This is our enemy because our spiritual life is a sacrificial one. 1 Tim. 6. 10 (NIV) says “for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

JEBUSITES. They were people who exploited and polluted others through immoral activities. This is our enemy because our body is a temple of our lord. Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV) says “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his

heart.”

These are the sort of enemies that were there in Caanan and they are very similar to the enemies of spiritual Israel faces too.

But the question is, when we are born again by God, why does he let the sinful desires in our flesh remain? The answer is in Judges 3:1-4(NIV) “These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars...(he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience) ...They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD’s commands, which he had given their ancestors through Moses.” Through these nations He is teaching the Israelites how to attack their enemies, stay healthy and remain obedient.

So He left sinful desire in us to perfect us. In God’s commandment there is no compromise but to attack and kill these sinful desires completely. From Colossians 3:5 (NIV) we can see that we are to “*put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry*”.

There are many examples in the Bible but one of the best living examples is that of the soldier in the army; after they take a pledge they then keep their body and mind fit and continue to train hard and master the use of their weapons so they can be ready for the battle at any time. They must always be alert to make sure no enemies enter their border and if enemies try to occupy their homeland then they must attack. Even after that they must continue to watch and protect the border until their period of service is over. This is the duty of a soldier in the army. They follow and obey completely their commander in training and in the battlefield.

This is the reason apostle Paul compared us with a good soldier. In 2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV) he says “*Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.*” So we have to show the same dedication. We should know to apply all our spiritual weapons to kill our enemies.

James tells us to “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil,*

and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4.7 KJV). So the complete unconditional surrender to God is our weapon and strength.

The apostle Peter advises in 1 Pet. 1: 14-16 (NIV) “*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’.*” We have to be holy because we are born again not by the perishable seed but by the word of our living holy God.

The Israelites were encouraged in Deuteronomy 20:1-4 (ESV) “When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is He who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.’”

In our spiritual race towards God’s kingdom, let’s remember the words of the apostle Paul who at the end of his life was able to say, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing*”(2 Timothy 4.7-8 NIV).

AS

FAITH

Faith; Tis Trust, Where we cannot see.
But if we have faith, we rest.
In God, Who is our all in all.
And we know He did us Call.
We feel his Presence day by day
And we trust him, Come what may
We pray he will deepen our Faith
That greater will be our Stay.

On Him, Who we love so dearly
And we love to Serve him well.
Only by faith do we see him
But wonderful we can tell.
All our trials and tribulation.
All our sorrows, and all fears
He is ever there to help us
And ready to stay our tears.



PG

SAMUEL, GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

4. Legacy to Posterity

The last days of Samuel were days of disappointment. The man whom he had anointed king over Israel had proved himself unworthy even before he had well taken up the duties of kingship. When the Ammonites threatened the land of Israel (1 Sam. 11.) Saul sent to all the tribes calling upon their warriors to rally to his standard and resist the invader. Three hundred thousand men of Israel and thirty thousand men of Judah were at his side almost immediately. It is evident from the story that Saul had not yet fully assumed the reins of power; Samuel was still looked upon as the head of the State, and Saul in his call to arms joined his own name with that of the old judge. *"Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel..."*. And Samuel, in his wisdom, called the people, not into immediate conflict with the enemy, but to Gilgal, one of Israel's sacred sites, that he might reason with them concerning their calling and their covenant, pleading with them and beseeching them that despite their great fault in asking God for an earthly king, they might still walk before God in his ways and reap the blessings of obedience promised in the covenant. There is something grandly pathetic in this glimpse of the saintly old man, conscious perhaps that this was the last opportunity he would ever have to witness to his God before the people on a national scale, conscious certainly that his own days were numbered and his influence fading fast, pleading with the people that they might remain faithful. *"God forbid"* he exhorted earnestly *"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and right way"*. And then his mood changed—or was it that he realised a demonstration of the Divine disapproval of the nation's attitude was long overdue—and with vehemence he cried *"Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king"*. (1 Sam. 12. 16-17). So Samuel called upon God, and there came thunder and rain, sweeping down upon the standing crops, crushing them to the earth, so that the people were affrighted and stricken with remorse. Here was an enemy their king could not overcome; foreign invaders he would oppose and perhaps overthrow by his own prowess and that of his followers, but the powers of Nature

only God could control. When they asked Samuel for a king like those of the other nations they had forgotten that. And now they came before him with some tardy acknowledgment of their sin. Too late, they relented of their purpose and came to their father in God for help in their dilemma.

It is to Samuel's credit that he did not take advantage of the situation to force a return to the old order. The people had asked for a king and had chosen a king, and now they should have their king. Samuel must have realised that all of this was in higher hands than his own, and that God had a purpose in permitting the institution of the monarchy. Moreover, Saul was now the Lord's anointed; he had been anointed by Samuel at the express command of God. Neither he nor the nation could go back on that now. So Samuel exhorted them to frame their national life within the limits of the new order but always in conformity with the laws of God, *"for"* said he, *"the Lord will not forsake his people for his great Name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people"*. A wonderful phrase, that, and one that stands as a beacon light through all Israel's history. No matter to what depths of unbelief and apostasy they have fallen, it is still and will always be true that they are the people of the Lord, that mainly from them is to come at last the nation which will shine forth from Jerusalem and turn the peoples of the earth to righteousness. There will be a remnant fitted for the purpose of the Lord.

Now that is true of spiritual Israel also on the higher plane. The Christian Church has been guilty of many failures, many denials of its Lord. Institutional Christianity has become a byword, and the lives of individual believers often a cause for reproach. But despite all this the purpose of God stands firm, and in his own due time He will have gathered a people, a remnant, from the work of those two thousand years, which will be amply qualified for the spiritual rule of the world, in association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavens, throughout the Millennial Age. The Lord will not forsake his people...because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people. Despite all the failures, all the shortcomings, all the hardness of heart, there will stand revealed at the end of this Age two companies of "holy ones", one earthly, in the Promised Land, one heavenly, with Christ, in the glory beyond, each ready to take up its own part in the final work of world reconciliation. Samuel must have had faith in some such eventual outcome of God's work when he bade Israel on that day to walk before God in sincerity and truth.

There was not much more for Samuel to do in this life. Saul was beginning to take things into his own hands and at eighty years of age Samuel would not be able to do much to stop him. That faith in the hearts of the people that had kept the Philistine hosts at arm's length during Samuel's judgeship was ebbing away fast now. Saul was engaged in war with the ancient enemy during the greater part of his reign, and although he nominally acknowledged God and rendered due homage to Samuel there was little true religious feeling or piety in his make-up. Eventually the day came when, flushed with his victory over the Amalekites, he ignored the command of Samuel that all their flocks and herds and possessions were to be utterly destroyed, and retained the best of them as spoil. Samuel, learning of all this before he set out to meet Saul after the battle, knew that Divine judgement could not be much longer delayed. In that same night Samuel had heard the voice of the Lord saying to him "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night." (1 Sam. 15. 11).

Did the old man's mind go back seventy years to that night when first he had heard the voice of the Lord, and upon his youthful ears had fallen the dread news of the doom of the house of Eli? What were the thoughts that possessed his mind as now he heard the sentence pronounced again? First it was his teacher who had been dispossessed, and Samuel kept in the favour of God; now it was his pupil who was cast off, and he himself remained. The wheel had turned full circle, the cycle of history had come back to its starting point, and again was Israel without a leader. Once more the full care of the nation before God must fall upon his shoulders. But there was a difference! In that long-since-gone day when Eli had been deposed, he himself had been in the first flush and bloom of youth, with all the zeal and enthusiasm that is characteristic of youth. He had thrown himself into the work of God with all the zest and ardour of his young heart, and had worked—only his God knew how hard he had worked—to restore Israel to God and keep them there. But now he was old; physical and mental powers were failing. The will to serve was still there; but how could he take up the work of the reformer and the national leader again as he had done those many years ago, and discharge it with the effect that had changed the life of the nation in that day? How could God expect him to bear this new and crushing burden in the evening of his days? Wearily he got up and set out to make his way to where Saul awaited him.

“Blessed be thou of the Lord” was the bland greeting with which he was hailed as he came within sight of the jubilant king *“I have performed the commandment of the Lord”*. Samuel had loved Saul, even as had all Israel, and he had spent a grief-stricken night with the Lord on the other man’s account. But there was no softening nor any indication of his inner feelings in the curt, uncompromising reply that quickly swept the complacent smile from the king’s face. *“What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”* The old man was not going to be trifled with; he had in his younger days seen the dire result of Eli’s own easy-going toleration of disregard for Divine laws and he was not going to condone or pass this by even though Saul were to him as a son. Saul immediately realised that the old prophet was in no mood for honeyed words and fair speeches, and hurriedly began to make excuses. He tried to explain that it was the fault of the people, that they had insisted upon keeping the best of the spoil alive “to sacrifice” he said hopefully “unto the Lord thy God”, as though to soften Samuel’s stern demeanour by a compliment. He might have spared himself the trouble, for the old man brusquely interrupted his labouring words. *“Stay”* said Samuel *“and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.”* And Saul had sullenly to listen to the sentence of excommunication which blasted all his hopes and schemes for a dynasty that should sit on the throne of Israel and bear his name through all succeeding generations. It was this happening that gave occasion for words that have been the inspiration for countless disciples throughout all ages since. *“Hath the Lord as great delight”* queried Samuel scornfully, *“in sacrifice and offering as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!”*

That was the end. Samuel never came to see King Saul again. He retired to his home at Ramah and there he remained, whilst Saul went on hopelessly fighting the Philistines and never getting really free from their yoke. The king who was to have led the forces of Israel out to battle like the kings of other nations never succeeded in making Israel a truly independent kingdom. He never achieved the resounding victories for which his ardent followers hoped and for which purpose they had clamoured for his appointment. It was Samuel who had given the nation freedom—Samuel, who trusted not in carnal weapons but in the power of the living God, who had pinned his faith not to the prowess of men but to

the Covenant of Moses. In rejecting the way of Samuel Israel had rejected the way of peace.

Israel went on fighting, and Samuel mourned for Saul, and for the blighting of a life that had opened with such promise, and for the disasters that must inevitably fall upon Israel. Until, in the fulness of time, there came to his inner consciousness, as it had done so many times in past years, that familiar Voice.

“How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite; for I have provided me a king among his sons”.

The aged prophet might have been excused for demurring. His first venture at anointing a king had turned out an arrant failure. Israel was in worse condition than before. What guarantee could there be that this fresh attempt would turn out any better. If Saul got to know about it, he would certainly wreak his vengeance on Samuel. He could expect nothing less than death for treason of that nature. It is clear that Saul was by now king in every sense of the word and Samuel's influence in national affairs was nil. But that was only as man seeth; God had work for him to do yet, work that would bear much fruit in days to come. Samuel demurred no longer but took up his staff and made his way to Bethlehem.

The story of David's anointing is well known. It was the last service that Samuel performed. He handed the torch, all but dropping from his failing fingers, to the fifteen-year-old lad who stood before him, so fresh and lovable in his innocent and vigorous youth. The friendship that sprang up on that memorable day between these two, between whom three generations arched their years, was never broken. In after days, David, fleeing from Saul, came to Samuel at Ramah for protection. He found the old man presiding over a school of the prophets, a national leader no longer, but still in the intensity of his zeal using what remained to him of physical and mental strength in the giving of instruction in the things of God to a few young men who looked up to him as pastor and father.

Could there have been a more fitting close to such a life? From being pre-eminent in affairs of state, one to whom the whole nation looked for

guidance and judgment; from being the defender of his people against their inveterate enemies the Philistines and the means of freedom from those enemies over a lifetime of years; from making and unmaking kings; from all this he had retired into the seclusion of his native village, content to spend his last days in the day-by-day teaching of a handful of young lads.

How many who in these later days have exercised great privilege of service and held prominent position before the Lord's people have found themselves able so gracefully to give place and serve at the end in such unnoticed and humble position, if so be that they might thus still glorify the God in Whose Name they have done all things? The humility of Samuel, as revealed by this final phase of his recorded history, throws a flood of light upon his character, a character that in this respect is worthy of all our emulation.

The King of Israel came on one more occasion, when the madness that was to darken the last years of his life was already gaining its hold upon him. It is a strange account, this story of the three bands of soldiers who went, each in turn, to arrest David at Samuel's Ramah retreat, and how they were overawed and subdued by the environment in which they found themselves, falling down and prophesying with the prophets they found there; and how Saul, impatient at the non-return of his messengers, went himself to Ramah and was himself overtaken by the same prophetic fervour. He fell down and prophesied before Samuel, we are told, and lay until the morning; and then got up and went away. (1 Sam. 19. 13-24). To understand this strange passage we must realise that the term "prophesying" included many kinds of emotional orations and it was more than likely that Saul's outburst on this occasion was a more or less incoherent frenzy born partly of baffled rage at his inability to win back Samuel's support and those blessing of God which he had lost by his own self-will and pride, and partly of his fearful dread, both of David, whom he now knew to be the Lord's anointed, and the ever-present Philistine menace. It is hardly likely that the Holy Spirit spoke in any way through this man whom God had rejected. The momentary excitement over, Saul arose, and for the last time passed out of sight and ken (knowledge) of the one who had placed him upon the throne and established the kingdom under him.

So Samuel breathed his last, an old man and full of days. He died as he had lived, in the company of the Lord's people and in the exercise of devoted ministry. The last sight of which he was conscious, as the failing eye-lids flickered down over the serene eyes, was that of the young men, the sons of the prophets, gathered around his couch, mute promise of the continuation of his life's work. He rested from his labours, but his works continued. Israel was to pass through strange and troublous times, but the light would break through again and the standard which Samuel had held aloft for nearly a century would be honoured once more. Many a generation yet to be born was to rise up and bless the name of Samuel, his sterling faithfulness to God and to his fellows echoing down the corridors of time for ever.

THE END
AOH

MEEKNESS

Fill me with Thy gentle meekness,
Make my heart like Thine;
Like an altar lamp, then let me
Burn and shine.



SELF CONTROL—LET THE MUD DRY

A young man had been badly insulted, and full of angry indignation, declared that he was going at once to demand an apology. "My dear boy," said Father Graham, a beloved old man of the village, "take a word of advice from an old man that loves peace. An insult is like mud: it will brush off much better when it is dry. Wait a little, till he and you are both cool, and the thing will be easily mended. If you go now it will only be to quarrel."



The young man took his advice, and before the next day was done, the insulting person came to beg forgiveness.

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THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

Part 6—"Be ye Holy"

Before we can reach a proper conclusion concerning the holiness of believing saints while here on earth there is one other aspect of the question which we must consider. It centres round the English word "wholly". We may speak of it as "wholeheartedness" or all-outed-ness. It implies the diligent, full-out application of all one's powers for all one's time, till all the full purpose of one's life has been achieved.

We see this aspect markedly manifest in God. Our gracious God is Holy, not only because of what He is; Holy, not only because of what He does, but Holy because of, "HOW" He acts. God is so utterly devoted to His great Plan that it "wholly" absorbs His vast resources. He has set Himself apart without stint or reservation to carry it through. Through all the years since time began He has kept on His way, pursuing His great objective. Though men have failed Him (as when Israel fell) He has not failed nor halted. He ceased not to work on, with such as served Him well, until He led them up from the temporary, literal, carnal things to the higher, better, eternal, spiritual things; and as each stage was reached, no whit of all His mighty Power, nor of His infinite Wisdom, nor of His regard for righteousness, nor of His inexhaustible, unfathomable Love has been withheld, until He has accomplished all His great design. He placed the whole of His illimitable resources at its call. Not merely for a day, or century, or age, but for all time, until the task is done, He pledged Himself—all that He is—all that He has—to see it through. Our God and Father has consecrated Himself to fulfil His Pledge—His oath-bound Promise—and from that He will not change. God is "*Hal*"—Holy, "wholesome", without taint, loving, benevolent, kind, in all He undertakes to do: and God is "*Halig*"—He is "wholly", completely, and forever pledged to His great eternal purpose to root out all sin and make the whole earth sweet and clean.

Do we wonder then that God should ask us to lay down our "all"—our ALL, for ALL our time? If He has consecrated His vast resources to that one great end, could He require less from us? Will He accept the bits and scraps, the odds and ends of human life given when the mood suits us, to co-labour in His Plan? What if God had done the same? What if He attended us by fits and starts? What if we had to wait upon His moods?

Thank God He is “all out”, in all He does, for all the time! Now let us trace this through and place the facts together. All of whom God takes to be His own were born children of wrath, even as others in the world. None was righteous; none was good. All had turned out of the way. Of His own Will He formed His plan to redeem and bless, in order to demonstrate to man His own great Love. When by His grace and leading we learned of this great Love, through the Saviour whom He freely gave to die, our hearts became lost in wonder, love and praise. As the truth broke out more clearly, we saw that He is calling a people for His Name, through whom to teach and bless “the residue of men” (Acts 15. 14-17). All whose hearts are right in the sight of God, and who, while they love their fellowmen, have found that all schemes of human uplift must fail, rejoice with great joy to know that *God purposes to help the human race* to throw off its burden of sin and selfishness. When they learn that God invites them to become co-workers with Him in this great task, it gives them joy untold. Though aware of their own sin, they ask “How can I be a co-worker with God—He is holy, just and good—and I am of the earth, weak, frail and tainted by my sin?” The diligent student of God’s word who progresses in his studies until he has learned something of the “deep things of God” finds God’s way of enabling him to co-operate set out in types and shadows of Israel’s wilderness days, as well as in more direct New Testament statements. In both Old and New Testaments he learns that all who walk and work with God must be made holy. But how can that be? What part can light have with darkness; or how can God consort with...sinners?

There is but one way. The scheme—the plan—must swallow up its advocates, both great and small, and then the excellences and virtues of that design will diffuse themselves to all who participate in its outworking. God has put Himself into it, and pledged Himself to Abraham and his posterity to carry it through. It is now open to such as would share in this task as Abraham’s Seed to do likewise. God, as author of the scheme, has full knowledge of the conditions and requirements incident to its performance, hence it is imperatively necessary that His mind should be the directing mind of the project, and that all other participants should subordinate their minds to Him. God only has the energy to carry it through, hence all who would share in its activities must be prepared in such manner that they become suitable conduits through which the Divine

energy can flow. A million volt conductor requires much more careful preparation than a ten volt conductor.

Since God has put Himself and all His illimitable resources into this scheme, and the believer (even though now reconciled and justified and made free as Abraham's Seed), is putting nothing but his very inefficient little self into it, it should be very obvious to all who understand that the very junior membership of this co-partnership must be under the absolute direction of its competent and omnipotent Sponsor. Hence consecration and full surrender is so very necessary.

However, no matter how poor and inefficient the invited participant really is (when accepting the gracious invitation) the intrinsic excellence of this purpose applies to him as it applies to all. He shares the credit of the co-partnership though in himself of little worth. Thus it matters not how little he brings into the scheme, he shares with all his partners its good-standing—whether of low or high degree. The all sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, as a Ransom for all (as part of this Plan) met the exacting claims which Justice preferred against the sinner—then, that embargo to life being removed, grace and mercy will reach down to the lowest depths of sin, and lift up the released sinner to life, to happiness and peace.

This Plan is one of kindness, benevolence, and tender love—it designs to set men free from sin, and enable them both to love and do the righteous thing—and do it from a sincere heart. Hence, the scheme is more than righteous in its aims, for righteous act is but the outflow of holiness within. It is wholesome within itself, and seeks to make men wholesome too. It is a holy thing, holy in itself, the absolute and certain foe of sin and self, and when completed will make the world of men holy too. It is a holy means leading to a holy end, a holy instrument devised for a holy task.

Each participant in this plan, today, has a special place allotted him. He is accorded a first-born's place. While all the Seed of Abraham will have a primary place in the plan, they who can show Abraham's faith are made a special Seed—a Spiritual Seed—and given a special place. This was foreshadowed and foreshown on two occasions when Israel was being separated from the nations.

In that dread night when the destroying angel carried the sword of death through Egypt, and slew its first-borns of man and beast, God claimed Israel's first-borns for Himself. He spared them from the angel's sword by the substitutionary death of a lamb, and by the sprinkling of its blood upon the door. From that night thenceforward God claimed them for His own, to serve His own deep purposes. All first-borns, both of man and beast, belonged to Him. God hallowed them to Himself; that is, He made them holy for Himself. Since Christ became the Lamb of God—"our Passover slain for us"—all who are God's first-born class, who have received the first-fruits of His Spirit, were claimed by God, to serve His greater purposes. They are hallowed unto Him. He makes them holy to serve His Plan.

When God had taken the whole tribe of Levi to replace the whole company of first-borns (Num. 3. 12, etc.) God chose Aaron and his sons from among their brethren and hallowed them again, to serve as priests in a very special sense. He caused them to be anointed with a very special oil, which no one else could make or use. Ear, thumb, great toe—representing hearing, serving and walking—were all touched with the sanctifying chrism (Lev. 8). That anointing oil was emblematic of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of anointing which we have received from Him constitutes all its recipients holy. It sets them apart specially to do the Lord's Will; to be prepared as instruments for His great scheme.

It needs a strong faith to believe that faulty, tainted men can be of use to God, and that men with ingrained sin can be counted holy men—yet, so it is! Aaron was but an ordinary man till God chose him and clothed him in white robes and chrismed him with oil. It was not for what he had already done that God's choice fell on him, but for what God could cause Him to do. No more is it for what we have done that God's Spirit comes upon us, but for what God will fit us to do. Consequently, as in Israel the priests were not made holy *by* service, but *for* service, so the priestly members of the Royal Priesthood are not accounted holy by what they have done, but by the blood of sprinkling and by their reception of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet.1.2).

In spite then of their vacillations and weaknesses, and their daily round of trespasses and sins, their holy standing is not lost. Based upon the precious blood of Jesus as the appointed Lamb of God, supplemented by

their own absolute surrender to the Will of God, their hallowed standing remains secure. The Altar sanctified all that touched it, no matter whence it came. (Exo. 29. 37; Exo. 30, 29; Matt. 23. 19). So the Church's Altar, hallowed by Jesus' own precious sacrifice, makes holy all that comes thereon no matter whence it comes. Our little sacrifice, so small and poor, so marred by nature, and defaced by sin, is savoured by holiness what time the Holy Priest of our profession takes it into His holy hands to place it on the altar-privilege. Apart from Him, it is of little worth; in His dear hands it is a holy thing. In all this elementary stage of our partnership with God He blesses us with an objective holiness, holiness received by us from an external source, holiness bestowed upon us with an "end" in view. It is "wholeness" attributed to attained men.

There is another side however to this design. Another phase of holiness begins when God has claimed us for His own. He starts to take the taint away and make the inward man hale and sound. By grace, God helps His child 'mid stress and strain, and by means of life's afflictions (counted light) God creates the likeness of His Son within. God shows His children what He is—a God of tender love and infinite compassion—and by this vision beautiful inspires a deep yearning in their hearts to be also made compassionate like Him. Their native leaning towards sin is slowly checked, its taint removed and its power broken. By slow degrees the sin-biased heart becomes more sweet and wholesome and actual holiness, increasing in degree, begins to take the place of sin and self. Thus new desires of heart and mind, created and nurtured by the hand of God are brought slowly into line with God's great plan. We too, become inspired by the same desire to see men blessed, and set free from sin and death. Thus the Holy Spirit's work within brings us actually more into line with the spirit of the Plan, and of the holiness of its Author and Master-Workman.

To Israel and her priesthood God said, "Consecrate yourselves and I will consecrate you." That is the spirit and principle of the whole Plan. First as we surrender our "little all" we are sanctified for the plan's sake; afterwards we are made holy for our own. First it is a holiness developed from within. We become possessed of holiness which deepens every day—a real subjective holiness which increases in degree. Whosoever therefore desires God's favour today must devote himself "wholly" to the same plan and purpose to which God has devoted Himself. It requires a

full and complete surrender to the Architect's Wisdom, to the Potter's hands, to the Sovereign Will. There must be no reservations, no half-hearted surrender, but a full and entire submission to the Purpose; as full and complete with our "little all" as that of the great Divine Father with His illimitable "all".

Thus wholly surrendered, He accepts the poor, lean offering, and makes it His very own. Linked with Himself it becomes indeed a holy thing. Men see it not in its true light, but God sees and knows, and He it is who sees its holiness; He it is who calls such a child a saint. No man while on earth is entirely free from sin, flawless, but sure as the heaven is above, there are those on earth, who, accepted and owned by Almighty God, are holy in His sight—Holy, because both He and they have "wholly" set themselves apart to accomplish His great ends and purposes; holy because His spirit fills their hearts. Their standing is not "holier-than-thou" towards their fellowmen; nor is it due to some peculiarity of dress, nor does it come because of ecclesiastical preferment, but simply and solely because God dwells within—making them thus a Holy Temple for the Lord.

Some men are holy in the sight of heaven. Let others say what they may, already they are saints. A holy standing has been accorded them by God Himself. Unknown by men they work in lowly spheres—in kitchen, workshop, office, farm or train. No titles grace their names; no silk or lawn adorn their limbs; no great accomplishments are theirs,...but...He who estimates all things for what they are, has called them saints and holy men—and they are so.

It brings no profanation to the Holy Name to say that God is working out a Plan. God could not bide eternally the rivalry of Sin. His very "Self" requires its overthrow. An end of its domination there must be, that God's habitation may be clean. That very purpose springs out of what He is. With reverence then, and deep esteem each loyal-hearted child will thank the Lord that He is working out the great Design, and in this work has asked His child to share with Him, the privilege of eradicating sin.

TH

FRUIT BEARING

*Will the Master find fruit in my garden?
Am I ready for him today?
Is it there for my Lord to gather
When he comes along the way?*

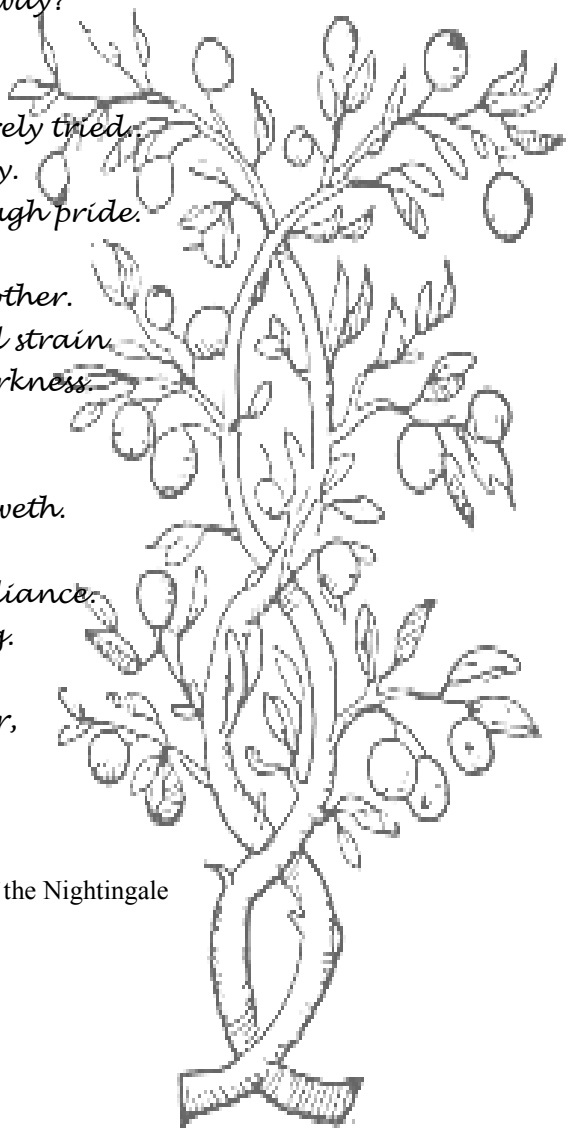
*LOVE for the unthankful.
LONG-SUFFERING when sorely tried..
JOY when the way is dreary.
MEEKNESS when hurt through pride.*

*GENTLENESS toward each other.
PEACE 'mid life's stress and strain.
TRUST when around is darkness.
FAITH spit loss and pain..*

*GOODNESS his grace bestoweth.
PATIENCE in suffering.
HOPE with its rainbow radiance.
TEMPERANCE in everything.*

*This is the fruit he looks for,
This is what he desires,
Fruit of the holy spirit,
This is what he requires.*

Songs of the Nightingale



THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the medium through which God makes contact with His creation. From Genesis, where “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” to Revelation, in which “the Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’” the pages of the Bible tell how God’s Holy Spirit is ceaselessly active in the world, steadily working to effect the full accomplishment of the Divine Plan.

There are many instances in the Old Testament where the Spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon men of God to inspire them to great things. The Spirit came upon Gideon, for example, and he delivered Israel. Moses prayed that the Lord would put His Spirit on all His people, that they might be prophets. We have the New Testament warranty for the fact that the prophets of old were “moved by the Holy Spirit” to speak and write the visions they saw, foreviews of events yet to come, revealed for the guidance of believers through the ages.

The office of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is of even deeper significance. Jesus promised His disciples that after His departure He would send them another means of guidance, and His promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in the coming of the Holy Spirit, a Divine power and influence resting upon each one and enabling them to do things that in their own unaided strength they could not have done. Every believer who now comes “into Christ” by consecration of life to Him is “begotten of the Spirit” to a new life, and thenceforth is under a transforming influence which opens his eyes to spiritual things and ultimately makes him ready for the spiritual salvation which is the hope of the Church.

The old expression “Holy Ghost” is out of date today. When the Bible was translated into English the word “Ghost” had sense of a spiritual power or influence, but today has the thought of personality added. The words “*pneuma*” in Greek and “*ruach*” in Hebrew, which are used for the Holy Spirit of God, are both the equivalent of the Latin “*spiritus*” meaning breath, breath of life, soul, mind, and in recognition of this fact the term “Holy Spirit” is used today more and more in preference to “Holy Ghost.”

The Holy Spirit must not be thought of then as a third “God” or as distinct from the Father, having a personality of its own. It is the influence and power of God in active operation that is called the Holy Spirit, and it is this power that creates and sustains all things and is effective in the individual life.

AOH

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*Glory to God in the
highest, and on earth
peace, goodwill
toward men.*

Luke 2.14



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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 looks for the 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.

(Please renew your request each year.)

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

A SEASONAL THOUGHT

A headline in the 'I' newspaper on 25 August 2014 said, "Too many parents don't chat to their children." Reg Bailey the government's 'childhood tsar' tells that dinner table conversation is in decline in UK households and he is also quoted as saying "how few of the British families had a dining room table or a kitchen table". This decline is a sign that all is not well for British children in the 21st Century.

The festive season with the carols, the Bank holidays are an ideal opportunity to talk to the younger members of our friends and families in the context of the promises of God and what happened over two thousand years ago. I was rather baffled when I heard a former work colleague say they had bought their first child a book about Christmas which mentioned nothing about the Biblical account in it, but solely about traditions like Christmas trees and so on.

Deuteronomy 11.19 (NKJV) directed the children of Israel told to "teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up ." The background to this was the giving of the Law and all the events of the

Exodus from the miracles in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the wilderness experience and the settling in the promised land. But it is clear they were being instructed to talk to their children.

Jesus himself had plenty of time for children. He said “suffer the little children to come unto me” or as its says in the New King James version, “Let the little children come to Me”.

Timothy had been brought up from childhood to know the scriptures (2 Tim. 3.14-15). It is implied in the first chapter of the second epistle to Timothy that he had known of those scriptures from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. They appear to have done a good job and can be an example to us.

Therefore let us take this festive season as an opportunity to share the wonderful message with the younger ones, like the angel who brought the message of deliverance to Zacharias and Elisabeth and then to the shepherds near Bethlehem.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.



Star of Bethlehem

Matthew 2. 1-2 *“There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east.”* (KJV)

Several years ago an article was written by James Chapman reporting that a 4th Century manuscript by Firmicus had been found stating in 6 B.C. that there had been a rare double eclipse by the moon passing in front of Jupiter. Firstly on March 20 and then on April 17. Firmicus, a Christian convert, implied it signified the birth of a king like Jesus.

Was this the guiding star?





ON EARTH PEACE— GOODWILL TOWARD MEN

These words form part of the message of the heavenly host at the Nativity. The record reads, “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” The way in which this was to be accomplished and the reason for the long delay, however, were hidden from those to whom the words were addressed, and the purpose of God in Christ is still a mystery to all save those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit to perceive the deep things of God. In order to understand how and when it will be true to say that there is “on earth peace, good will toward men” it is essential to appreciate Christ’s method of dealing with evil, and also the mystical Body of Christ, composed of not one but many members.

The message had special appeal to the shepherds and those to whom they recounted the wonderful message that they had heard from heaven because their land had not known true peace for many years. Their background was one of captivity, warfare, rebellion, and severe suffering; they looked back upon the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and the consequent national disintegration. The restoration after the seventy years of desolation was only as a tributary nation under Babylon, later under the Medo-Persians, and then under the Greeks. The attempts of the Greeks to Hellenize them led to revolt which succeeded after dreadful persecution, not due solely to the military prowess of Judas Maccabeus, but more by reason of the collapse of the Greeks before the rising power of Pagan Rome. Under the Hasmoneans there was a period of unstable independence until 63 B.C., when Pompey marched his Roman legions into Jerusalem. From that time until 70 A.D. there were many rebellions against the invaders, and it is little wonder that all men were in expectation of Messiah as they longed for relief from their sufferings. In 37 B.C., for example, Herod was sent to Jerusalem with the title “King of the Jews” and crucifixion was the legalised penalty for any traitorous act against the Roman yoke. While Jesus was a young child,

however, a widespread revolt broke out and Jewish rebels held out for months in the fortress of Sepphoris a few miles from Nazareth. Eventually, the Romans put down this insurrection with all the savage cruelty of old-time Pagan Rome. Some two thousand male prisoners were crucified, while women and children were sold into slavery. These terrible happenings and similar episodes are reflected throughout the Gospels as, for instance, in Luke 13: 1, where we read of “the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”

In the midst of these conditions, Jesus grew to manhood’s estate, and by reason of His inherent perfection He would naturally stand head and shoulders above His fellows. They would look to Him for leadership in confident anticipation that He would be able to free them from the Roman aggression. They expected, as do so many today, that “on earth peace, good will toward men” would come by means of armed force by which their enemies would be crushed in the same way as they themselves had been subjugated. How bitterly disappointed must they have been, therefore, when the One to Whom they looked for leadership on His return from the wilderness declared an entirely different policy. He exhorted them to love their cruel enemies and to do good unto them; if they were smitten on one cheek, as often happened in the streets, then they were to turn the other; if a Roman compelled them to carry a pack one mile, they were to go twain (two). There were many features of their own Law which were somewhat severe, but Jesus taught them by both precept and example to act in an exactly contrary manner. In Matthew 5 there are many of these contrasts: “Ye have heard that it hath been said,” then follows, “But I say unto you,” as in verses 43 and 44: “Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Next time—Part 2 The More Excellent Way

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
For thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13.2

WHITE

LIGHT as it falls upon this earth is reflected in a thousand ways: there are flowers of every hue, the grey stone, the purple mountains and the green grass. The colour variations are due to a portion of the spectrum of light being absorbed, while other portions are reflected. An object appears blue because it drinks in the red and yellow wave-lengths of luminiferous aether and sends away the blue, hence we see the unwanted portion of the spectrum.

With regard to white objects as snow or wood, the colours are not separated, neither are they absorbed, but are reflected in unison, hence we observe the whiteness of sunlight. Black articles on the other hand have entirely opposite effects. They absorb or kill every beautiful ray: light is obliterated, and this results in darkness. Bearing in mind this simple teaching of science, we readily perceive how very appropriate and forceful become the resultant symbolism, and thus *white* is an illuminating emblem of purity, righteousness, unselfishness and love.

Black tokens the very reverse of these noble characteristics as indicated by the words of Jesus and the Apostles. Our Lord declared that if the “light” within the mind and heart of a Christian be or become “darkness,” how great is that darkness! (Matt. 6: 22, 23) The apostles tell of some who have “received the grace of God in vain,” and who have not responded whole-heartedly to the love-lights of truth. They have become wanton, selfish, proud, boastful and arrogant, and whatever their professions may be, their judgment is death—the second death—“blackness and darkness for ever” (2 Peter 2: 13-17; Jude 11-13).

The statement “I (will) clothe the heavens with blackness” (Isaiah 50: 3), is in agreement with the words of the Master, that “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matt. 24:29 R.V.). This depicts the rejection of the Gospel and Mosaic truth (sun and moon) by so many a leader who are looked upon as the “stars” of Christendom. These men turn to “evolution” and human understanding, wisdom and might, as the safeguards of society and to bring about peace and earthly prosperity. How the Lord regards them is graphically pictured

in Jeremiah 17: 5, 6.(R.V.) “*Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*”

Each member of that little band of enlightened Christians have totally different aspirations. Scattered throughout the age our Lord said concerning these, “Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12: 32). They have placed God at the pinnacle of all their affairs and they know that Christ’s kingdom alone will mean the panacea of human ills. Hence their prayer continually ascends to the Most High God, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth.”

Misunderstood, unknown and unwanted by mortal men, God has had His own *hidden city*. This has been vastly different to the church organisations of Christendom. “The world knoweth *us* not, because it knew Him not” (1 John 3: 1). They are unknown to each other except as they open their hearts. Then they find that others have also been illumined by the spirit of the Most High. It will not be, however, till the “first resurrection” that it will be clearly known as to who have constituted the Lord’s true people down through the age. (Rev. 20: 6, 2 Tim. 2: 19).

Let us consider the pathway of one of these honoured members of Zion. In so doing we will use that emblem *white* as mentioned so freely in the Scriptures. Here is one who has grown lofty in his imaginations. He has become proud and conceited on account of his superior gifts. With an air of self-importance and self-satisfaction, he pursues his journey through life. Suddenly reverses come and he is humbled to the dust. Friends leave him and his heart grows cold, his courage fails and he weeps with anguish of spirit. Gradually he turns to the only source of comfort and it is only when he cries out “God be merciful to me a sinner” that the true light comes flickering into his soul. He then understands that he is not one whit better than his fellow men, and that his former self-righteousness was but “filthy rags” (Isa. 64: 6) before the great God eternal. He cries aloud “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psa. 51: 7). Then, like heavenly music are the words “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as *white* as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as *wool*” (Isa. 1: 18). He is then directed to that only channel of comfort and hears the

message—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16: 31). At last peace enters slowly and surely into his being. He desires to know more of God's way. His interest becomes intensified in the word of truth. Knowledge is added to knowledge and he begins to understand the why and the wherefore that "God is love," and "God is light." At last he commits his all unto the Lord—

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my will and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

After this he experiences a marvellous change "all things become new." He cries aloud "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,...for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with a robe of righteousness." (Isa. 61:10) "Blessed (happy) are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Rom. 4: 7). The gift of the holy spirit has now become a constant possession and he rejoices in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5: 1-5).

Life's pilgrim way begun, there arises new trials, unforeseen difficulties, and his faith is tried. Sometimes he errs in word and deed, but on all occasions he asks forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1: 7-9). Thereby he keeps his garments always white and retains possession of the Holy Spirit (Eccl. 9: 8). Continually he longs for a garment that can never be spotted, for he learns from experience that this is impossible whilst in the flesh. (Rom. 7: 18).

Then he remembers the words addressed to the congregation at Sardis. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I

will not blot his name out of the book of life” (Rev. 3: 4, 5). Then one glad day, his covenant by sacrifice is completed. The cold sullen river of death has been crossed and he finds himself a member of the Bride Company, which has taken nigh two thousand years to complete. O wondrous favour!—“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19 : 7, 8). The word “*white*” in this text is from the Greek *lampros* meaning bright. The thought conveyed is fine linen illuminated by the glory of God, thus resulting in dazzling purity.

There have been some who have received the Holy Spirit throughout the age, but who have allowed their garments to be dragged by stains and spots. They have not kept their consciences transparent before the Lord, even though at heart they would rather do God’s will. They lacked in faith and courage, consequently the Lord has not been altogether pleased with them, but in mercy He saves them, even though they have lost the prize of the high calling (Phil. 3: 13-15). This class is shown in Revelation 7. After describing the 144,000 of the elect, a great company is mentioned as having passed through great tribulation— “What (who) are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The Apostle speaks of this class who were subject to bondage through fear of death (Heb. 2: 14,15). The death here indicated is sacrificial, as is shown by the words of Psalm 50: 5. “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” The emblem of white is so important in the sight of the Lord that it entered freely in the tabernacle rites, usually in the form of fine linen. When the temple erected by Solomon was dedicated, the Levites and singers, with their sons and brethren, were all of them arrayed in “white linen” (2 Chron. 5: 12).

This emblem will be significant to the whole world of mankind. “And I saw a great *white* throne, and... the dead, small and great, stand before God” (Rev. 20: 11,12). Thus the principles of truth and justice will pervade every law and teaching during the glad millennial day, when humanity will “learn righteousness” (Isa. 26: 9).

This was foreshadowed by the glory attending the reign of King Solomon. The Queen of Sheba hearing of his wisdom and majesty, visited him and exclaimed in her amazement “the half was not told me!” (1 Kings 10. 7). This pictures the delight and glad surprise that will fill many a soul as they are brought back from their sleep of death. They will see the glory of the Lord and exclaim with pent-up enthusiasm—“Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isa. 25: 9). Then “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new... Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Rev. 21: 1-7).

What more can be said of this wonderful emblem which so often occurs in the Scripture of Truth? In moving panorama we observe white horses, white-robed angelic beings, white clouds, white curtains, white stones, and hair as white as wool. A word, however, relative to that white metal *silver*. This very significantly symbolises truth, not only by reason of its colour, but also relative to its method of purification. “*The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*” (Psalm 12: 6).

O marvellous power of divine precept, as it permeates both mind and heart! The result is life eternal and love enthroned. Joy and peace gradually take full possession for it is charged with blessedness—“Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are...sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand...Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (Dan. 12: 9-12).

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HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

4. God came from Teman

The third chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy opens with prayer and closes with praise. Between these expressions of worship there is a wonderfully eloquent account of Israel's last trial and Divine deliverance at the end of the Age, told in language which takes for its inspiration that other glorious epoch in Israel's history, the time of the Exodus. The prophecy is written in poetry—Hebrew poetry—and in form to be sung at the Temple services to the accompaniment of musical instruments. We may not doubt that in after days the noble strains of Habakkuk's psalm often were heard in Jewry, the hearts of the people beating fast with excitement and their eyes growing bright with pride as they thought of the salvation that one day must surely come.

“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.” That is the superscription, the title, of the psalm, appearing in the Authorised Version as verse 1. The translators were uncertain as to the meaning of the last part of the phrase and so left the Hebrew word “shigionoth” untranslated, to the lasting puzzlement of future generations. Scholars now know that it referred to what we call the ‘metre’ of the song. In the original Hebrew the lines are of the impetuous, lofty style, composed in a state of deep mental stress or excitement, to which the Greeks gave the name of “dithyramb”; hence the title “upon Shigionoth” is best translated “in dithyrambic measure”, as Moffatt renders it.

It is sometimes suggested that this third chapter was written at a much later period in Habakkuk's life, and that this accounts for the change in style. What is much more likely is that the vision awakened the dormant fire in Habakkuk's life, and that this accounts for all the passionate zeal which lay beneath his faith. In chapters 1 and 2 he had talked with God, prayed to God, and interceded with God—and God had answered and talked with him; but it is certain that at the end of chapter 2 heaven had been opened before the prophet's eyes and he had seen, first, the Lord seated upon his heavenly throne (ch. 2 vs. 20) and then the stupendous vision of the Lord coming forth to bring to pass his “strange work” (Isa. 28. 21) upon the earth. And it was that vision which, in the intensity of his excitement, he recorded in such glowing, vivid symbols in verses 3 to 15 of Chapter 3.

It was this experience that led him first of all to utter what must surely be one of the most moving prayers in the whole of the Scriptures. "*O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy*" (vs. 2). He had realised at last that there was ordained a great gap between his own day and the day of the vision when Israel would be completely and finally delivered, and he was concerned that God should save alive his people, the work of his hands, during the intervening time. The word really means "preserve alive" as well as "give new life at the end", and is as often rendered "save alive" as it is "quicken". Habakkuk acknowledged that he had heard God's words, but although the scenes of the vision had filled him with joy and exultation, and given him a new confidence as to Israel's ultimate destiny, he was still "afraid" as to the intervening period. He knew that his people time and again would merit Divine condemnation for their faithlessness and hardness of heart. He knew how often they had been scattered and enslaved in past times because of their apostasy, and although he could not doubt God's faithfulness, his heart failed him when he thought of Israel's waywardness. And so, like Moses of old, he besought God on behalf of a stiff-necked and perverse people, that God would not cause his purpose to fail even although the people would prove undeserving of his bounty; that in his chastisement He would always save a remnant, and in the end "bring forth judgment to victory". "*Preserve alive thy work in the midst of the years*" he pleaded "*in wrath remember mercy.*"

With that his mood changed. Even as he uttered the words he knew that God would be faithful, that deliverance would surely come, and with it the utter overthrow of all those evil forces which threatened and oppressed his people. And as the glorious history of the Exodus flooded into his mind he lifted up his eyes to the distant horizon and the Holy Spirit quickened his spiritual faculties so that before his wondering gaze there appeared the splendour of the God of Israel, a glory overspreading the skies and putting even the sun to shame as He advanced in the forefront of his ancient people, destroying their enemies before them and leading Israel into her desired haven. To the prophet's lips there came, unbidden, words which at one and the same time combined the events of the Exodus, the upheavals of Nature which so aptly symbolise the arising of God to set up his Kingdom, and the details of that last conflict in the empire of men which the Scriptures elsewhere call "Armageddon" and

“Jacob’s Trouble”.

What did Habakkuk actually see? He beheld a great manifestation of natural forces—all in vision—the gathering and the breaking of a terrible tempest over the earth; in the midst of the tempest, riding upon the wings of the wind, Jehovah himself in his war chariot, hurling celestial thunderbolts upon the wicked and burning up his enemies round about (Psa. 97. 3). He saw Israel, a helpless people, surrounded by hostile nations invading the Holy Land, and he saw those nations swallowed up in the zeal of God’s fury. He watched the storm die away, and Israel, resplendent in the calm sunlight of Divine favour, delivered for ever from all her oppressors. That was what he saw, and as he looked he clothed what he saw in the language of the story he knew best, the story of the Exodus; at the same time he described the later conflict that is yet to come, the one that closes the end of this Age.

We can be certain of that because it is that conflict which results in Israel’s final deliverance and the fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning the Kingdom, and as if to make doubly sure, Habakkuk in verse 16 places on record his knowledge that he himself was to “rest” until that day arrived. If this prophet is in fact to be one of the heroes of faith who will rise again to lead Israel in the day of Christ’s Kingdom, then there is a very definite fitness about the words of verse 16. But of that more presently.

In reading the verses that follow, it needs to be remembered that Habakkuk is writing in what has been called the “prophetic perfect” tense, that is to say, he took his stand, mentally, at the time of the fulfilment of the vision and described the events as having already occurred. This is a common practice in Hebrew prophecy; the absolute certainty of the things seen, even though still many years in the future, justifying the use of the completed tense. We appreciate the force of the symbolism best if we, in thought, range ourselves alongside the prophet and behold what he beheld, our imagination fired by the glory of his language.

“*GOD CAME FROM TEMAN, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.*” (vs. 3) That is the tremendous announcement with which Habakkuk heralds his vision. Then comes the rubric instruction “*Selah*”, the command for a reverent hush and pause in the Temple service, for priests and people to

keep silence, as it were, before the God Whose majestic presence has so solemnly been declared to them. And if the people thus kept silence before the ineffable (inexpressible) Name upon every occasion that this Psalm was sung in their worship, with what more awesome reverence must the prophet have viewed the opening scenes of the vision which gave birth to the words. He was evidently looking southward toward Teman, (Edom or Seir), and Paran (in the Arabian desert), the two centres from which God had arisen to lead his people to the Promised Land, and he saw the dawn of a golden radiance that told him of the Lord's rising up once again for deliverance. He might have thought of the words of Moses "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of (his) saints"— holy ones—(Deut. 33. 2). He must certainly have recalled the inspiring words of the 68th Psalm "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him... O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness;... The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel" (vs. 1,7,8), for this is the song of Israel's march toward the land under the leadership of God, as the historian declares in Num. 10. 35; "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." For a moment Habakkuk may have seen what Balaam, seven hundred years previously, had seen in vision, the ten thousands of Israel surging homeward to their land of inheritance under that golden radiance of the Divine presence, and have repeated to himself Balaam's words on that great occasion: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him ... how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. . . God brought him forth out of Egypt. . . He shall eat up the nations his enemies . . . Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. 23 and 24). And as Habakkuk watched, the brightness of the Shekinah glory, the "pillar of fire by day", illumined all the sky and all the earth, preceding and guiding Israel in the way. So did he break out into the glowing description that follows the pause. "*His glory covered the heavens, and of his praise the earth was full. And his brightness was as the sunlight; rays streamed forth out of his hand* (Leeser), *and in them was hidden His might*" (Ferrar Fenton). The whole picture is that of a great sunrise of golden fire advancing from the horizon to overspread the heavens and resolve itself into the glory of the Lord, the

Shekinah, leading the hosts of redeemed Israel back home.

And the question we have to ask ourselves is this: to what event in the end of the Age does this opening portion of the vision refer? Where is our starting point for the final application of Habakkuk's prophecy?

Analogy points us to the day when God will "set his hand the *second time* to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt . . . and from the islands of the sea . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11. 11-12). And not only so, but to a time when God begins to rise up for the salvation of all men from the power of sin and death, a time when He commences to set in motion those forces which result in the glory of the Second Advent, to inaugurate the "sending" of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the "Times of Restitution of all things" (Acts 3. 19-23). The vision as it proceeded showed that the golden glory was to be followed by a dark storm before the ultimate "afterward of peace", but prior to the storm there was certainly a phase in which the sunshine of Divine favour shone for a brief space upon the earth, an earnest of good things to come. And that fact gives us our starting point. The vision dates the commencement of its fulfilment at that time in the history of this world—the nineteenth century—when both Christian and Jew became conscious of the active working of God in their separate destinies. The Christian world—that section of it which was "watching for his appearing"—realised the approaching consummation of the Age and the imminence of the Advent of its Lord, and the Jew who still prayed in sincerity and in earnest longing "next year in Jerusalem" saw the outward evidence of forces moving toward the accomplishment of his desire. Before the storm clouds of this present time of trouble had begun to gather there was a period of golden glory during which light from the Heavenly Throne was illumining the Plan of God as never before, and the roseate prospect of the coming Kingdom, for both Christian and Jew, became clearer and more entrancing as year succeeded year, "This Gospel of the Kingdom" said Jesus, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24. 14). That word was fulfilled in that century as never before. An understanding of the nature and purpose of the Millennial reign was attained such as had not blessed the Church in previous centuries. The knowledge of "Advent Truth" relating to the coming again of Jesus was brought to a higher and

more complete stage than had ever been known. On the Jewish side the movement for the return to Palestine—then drawing its inspiration largely from religious sources—was born, and men began to talk of a Jewish state and nation. In a score of ways the golden light of Divine favour overspread the earth and caused men to look up and lift up their heads, sensing that deliverance was drawing nigh. In very truth a mighty angel had *“come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”* (Rev. 18. 1).

To be continued
AOH

BRIGHTEST AND BEST OF THE SONS OF THE MORNING

BRIGHTEST and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall,
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure:
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid.

The author of these words is Reginald Heber (1783-1826). A precocious child who was translating from Latin to English at the age of 7 and spent many years in a rural parish in Hodnet, near Shrewsbury before being appointed Bishop of Calcutta, where he died after a few years.

Here are some of the texts, according to hymnary.org, which are associated with this hymn;

Job 38:7 (NKJV) When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Matthew 2:2 & 9(NKJV) saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.

Malachi 4.2 (NKJV) But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.

Matthew 2:11 (KJV) And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

Mark 12:41-44 (NKJV) Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much.. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

Revelation 22:16 (NKJV) “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Luke 18: 1-14

ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH

Four long centuries had measured out their length since the voice of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, had been stilled in death, and now it was time for the first of the New Testament prophets to become conscious of the Divine fervour being kindled within him. In a very real sense the story of the New Testament began when Zacharias the aged priest saw the angel in the Temple. Fifteen months later and Jesus the Messiah, long expected by Israel, was to be born at Bethlehem. But Zacharias had no idea or thought of that in his mind on the day that he went into the Temple as usual to carry out his customary duty of offering incense at the Golden Altar during public prayers. Zacharias was an old man, somewhere between eighty and ninety years of age, and he had served God very faithfully in his appointed sphere, admittedly a humble sphere, for very many years. He was of the priestly line from Aaron and from the age of thirty had served as such; for over half a century he had filled a minor role in the priests' office and never dreamed that in the evening of his days he was to play a major part in the greatest event of all time, a part that would lift him up and set him apart from his fellow-priests for ever.

Luke says that he was "*of the course of Abia*" (Hebrew *Abijah*). A thousand years before this time King David had divided the priests of Aaron's line, grown to a considerable number, into twenty-four divisions or "courses", each to take turn in discharging the ceremonial duties of the Temple which he purposed to build. Of these "courses" the eighth was that of Abijah (1 Chron. 24. 10). Sixteen courses were of the lineage of Eleazar and eight of Ithamar, sons of Aaron; there is no way of determining to which lineage Zacharias belonged, except that the probability is two to one in favour of Eleazar. By the time of the First Advent the Temple ceremonial had become greatly modified and changed from that instituted by Moses in the days of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but it is clear that Zacharias, as a priest, by blood descent one of the sons of Aaron, had the right of entry into the Holy Place in front of the Vail that shrouded the Most Holy, there to perform his allotted share of the ceremonial. Twice in the year he took his turn in the service for a week, and alone in the Holy Place he offered incense.

Much had happened in Israel during the course of his long life. He was born, in all probability, during the time of the Maccabean priest-kings who ruled the independent Jewish state before the Romans came. Judea was, for a short period, a kind of theocracy; the sons of Aaron, represented by the Maccabean dynasty, combined within themselves the religious office of High Priest and the secular one of King. In all likelihood the reigning priest-king at Zacharias' birth was Alexander Jannaeus, proud of his descent from Aaron through the Davidic "course" of Jehoiarib, but equally proud of the fact that Judea, as a sovereign state, was in treaty relationship with the Roman empire as an equal. Under Alexander Jannaeus the frontiers of the State were extended to include Samaria, Edom, Trans-Jordan and half-way across Sinai to what is now El-Arish. The kingdom almost attained the extent it had enjoyed in the days of David and Solomon, and many believed that the time of Israel's prophesied supremacy over the nations had come and nothing now intervened before the coming of Messiah.

But before the lad Zacharias had outgrown his teens the Romans had torn up the treaty, Pompey had invaded Judea, attacked the Temple, committed the unforgiveable sacrilege of forcing his way into the Most Holy, and the bright vision faded. The brief period of independence, lasting only about a century, ended, and Judea became subject to Rome. At thirty years of age Zacharias assumed his duties as an Aaronic priest and commenced his ministry in the Temple, only to see it pillaged of all its wealth by Crassus the Roman general. Fifteen years later he experienced the terrors of war when the Parthians captured and plundered Jerusalem; within a few more years Herod the Edomite was laying siege to the Holy City. When Zacharias was about fifty an earthquake shook the country and thirty thousand perished; two years later came the horrors of pestilence. Another fifteen years, and he heard the news that Herod, now well established as Rome's puppet ruler of the land, was going to pull down the Temple, built by Nehemiah five hundred years earlier at the return of the Captivity, and erect a more magnificent one in its place. And now for nearly two decades he had been offering incense in Herod's new building; the glories of his youth had passed away, his nation was subject to an alien power, and still Messiah had not come. But with quiet faith he continued his allotted task in the daily ritual, doing that which lay to his hand to do and leaving the greater issues to God—until the day he saw the angel.



The wife of Zacharias was Elisabeth, also of the lineage of Aaron. “*They were both righteous before God*” says Luke (1.6) “*walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*”. Those two words indicate the moral and the ceremonial aspects of the law respectively. In every respect this aged couple were fit vessels ready for the Lord’s hand for his use—yet He waited until nearly the end of their lives before He used them. But Elisabeth had no child, none whom they could train up in the nurture and reverence of the Lord and send out into the world to crown their life-long service with his own. Even their names testified to reverence and respect for the faithful of their own tribe of ancient times, for “Zacharias” is the Hebrew *Zechariah*, the name of the High Priest murdered in the Temple in the days of King Joash, and “Elisabeth” is the Hebrew *Elisheba*, the name of the wife of Aaron. There is not much doubt that these two were convinced of the imminence of Messiah’s Advent, and numbered among the little band of Messianic believers who at that time “*looked for redemption (deliverance) in Jerusalem*”. (Luke 2.38).

But above all things it is evident that Zacharias possessed the prophetic power; his life was lived so much in tune with God that he could hear things and see things that other men could not hear or see. The voice of the prophets had been silent for four hundred years and perhaps men in Israel had ceased to expect that it would ever be heard again. In Zacharias it was heard again. The time had come when a messenger was to be sent to Israel and a message given, a herald of the fulfilment of so much that the earlier prophets had predicted, and as a first step to the raising up of that messenger the Lord sought for a clean vessel, a righteous environment in which the messenger would be born and spend his formative years, before the time came for “*his shewing unto Israel*” (Luke 1.80). He found a man for his purpose, not among the decadent and corrupt relics of the Aaronic line manifested in the descendants of the Maccabean priest-kings, soiled and polluted by their contact with and involvements in the political manoeuvres and alliances of the day, but in the person of this humble and faithful man who had served so faithfully in his obscure position, but always close to God, always attending on the altar. So the angel was sent to Zacharias.



It was a thrilling message he brought. The boy that was to be born to them was destined to be “*great in the eyes of the Lord*”. He was to stand before God in the spirit and power of Elijah, the rugged old prophet who once converted the whole nation from Baal worship in a single day; he was to turn many of the people to the Lord their God, and he was to herald the coming of Messiah and prepare the people for his Advent. Wonderful news indeed; so wonderful that it is perhaps understandable that Zacharias, in mingled wonder and incredulity, asked for a sign to establish the angel’s authority and convince him that he was not in fact the victim of a hallucination. It was not that he had no faith; he knew God could do this thing, but in asking for some material evidence that would linger with him after the messenger had departed he was but following the example of earlier worthies faced with similar situations. He got the sign he wanted, but it was accompanied by a reproof. The measure of doubt implied by his request was not justified after the lifetime he had spent in the service of God. As a man possessed of the prophetic spirit and living his life “in tune” with God his spiritual discernment should have been sufficiently clear to perceive the authority in the angel’s words and accept them without question. There is a difference between Zacharias’ question “*How shall I know this, for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years*” and the quiet rejoinder of Mary to the same angel six months later, “*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*” Zacharias wanted proof of the angel’s veracity; Mary accepted his word without question and only asked how the wonder was to come about.

Zacharias was to be dumb until the birth of his son. That was a sign to the people as well as himself. Upon his emergence from the Temple they saw that some great thing had happened to him, alone in there. “*They perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple*”. Not until his son was born was his speech restored and he could tell to the full what had taken place that eventful day.

This is the point at which Zacharias takes his place among the prophets. The glowing rhapsody of Luke 1. 68-79 is not only a song of praise; it is also a prediction of things to come. Right at the outset he declared that God had “*raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*”. The obvious reference is to Messiah, but Jesus had not yet been born; how then did Zacharias know anything about it? The obvious answer is given in verse 67; he was inspired by the Holy Spirit and

empowered to see things that were yet to come. He saw the Advent of the Deliverer; he saw Israel saved from her enemies and the fulfilment of the Divine promise to Abraham; he saw Israel exalted in prosperity and he saw the coming of the light to the whole world that was sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. And then, turning towards his new born son, he predicted that he should be the Prophet of the Highest, to herald the Messiah and prepare the nation for his coming, to turn the people from the bondage of sin to serve the living God. A wonderful day was that and a wonderful prophecy. Thirty long years were to pass before it could begin to be fulfilled and many of those who heard it were destined to finish their lives and rest in death before that fulfilment commenced, but who can doubt that the story was handed down from father to son and from mother to daughter in those families that “*looked for deliverance in Jerusalem*” so that when one day, a young man startled the nation with his clarion (trumpet) cry “*Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,*” there were those who at once were ready to listen and to follow him.

By that time Zacharias and Elisabeth were probably dead. Luke (1. 80) tells us that “*the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*” That does not sound as though he had known a settled home life in one of the towns of Judah. Quite possibly he was an orphan from his teens. He might well have been a member of the community of Essenes at Masada, made so famous in recent years by the discovery of the “Dead Sea Scrolls”. That would account very well for his characteristic outlook and ministry, and would well explain the expression “in the deserts”. Like Elijah his prototype, he was a son of the mountainous and desert places, having no place in the cities and haunts of men—and all Israel went out into the desert to hear him.

John the Baptist was the last of the prophets and it is customary to say that he was the successor of Malachi. That is not strictly true, for Zacharias and Elisabeth came in between and they also were of the prophets. Elisabeth had the same spirit of prediction as her husband; when Mary, immediately after the Annunciation, journeyed into Judea to visit her aunt, the older woman knew at once that the mother of the Messiah had come to her (Luke 1.43) and invoked the blessing of the Lord upon Mary. She, too, must have known, by the Holy Spirit indwelling in her, that her son was to be the herald foreseen by Malachi four hundred years earlier when he

declaimed “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly (presently) come in his temple*” (Mal. 3.1). John was both “Elijah that should come” and the “herald to prepare the way of Messiah” and he fulfilled both offices faithfully as was ordained.

John is the last of the sons of Aaron recorded in Scripture. Of his precise relation to the High Priestly line nothing is known. The true succession was lost a hundred or more years before John was born and the last officiating High Priest of Aaronic descent was Aristobulus in 35 B.C. For all that is known to the contrary it might well be that John’s pedigree was nearer the legal line of High Priests than that of the Maccabean priest-kings who held the office for the last century or so. We do not know; it would be very appropriate, though, if it was the rightful High Priest after the order of Aaron in the days of the First Advent who announced to Israel the coming of the Lord. Only God knows; whether of High Priestly lineage or not, these three, Zacharias, Elisabeth and John, priests and prophets, were faithful to their calling and in that faithfulness brought the Old Dispensation to a close and prepared the way for the New, the Dispensation of the Gospel.

AOH



The Angel of the Lord to Manoah foretelling birth of Samson
Judges 13.2-25

A remarkable person flashes across the pages of the Old Testament. He is called “the angel of the LORD.” On several occasions at crisis times for God’s people, this amazing being appears. He speaks with incredible authority. He acts with startling power. Sometimes he brings severe judgement; sometimes he brings gentle comfort. He leaves those who see him in awe.

On one very ordinary day in the time of the judges in Israel, one very ordinary couple had a visit from the angel of the Lord. They were certain of one thing when he left—he was no ordinary angel!

Douglas Connelly

HE PREACHED TO ANGELS

“...put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient in the days of Noah” (1 Pet. 3. 18-20).

Theologians and commentators alike have puzzled over the meaning of this text. The general assumption for centuries has been that it tells of Christ descending into Hades at the time of his death and preaching repentance to some of the unconverted dead—those who died at the time of the Flood. Why these alone should have been singled out for this favour is neither understood nor explained. The fact that orthodox Christian theology does not, and did not, permit an opportunity for conversion after death rendered the text particularly difficult, although some of the celebrated theologians of the past got over this by asserting that Christ went to Hades to preach, not repentance and conversion, but unchangeable condemnation for past unbelief. The descent into Hades became a Church doctrine but one which was always fraught with some difficulty.

The problem disappears when it is realised, as it does tend to be realised nowadays, that the “spirits in prison” are not dead human beings at all. A correct understanding of Genesis 6 and the nature of events at the time of the Flood makes it clear that these spirits are the rebellious angels who apostatised from their lawful estate and assumed human form to live on the earth as men, and were condemned, after Divine judgment had been passed on them, to remain in the imprisoned state, neither on earth nor in heaven, which St. Peter describes in 2 Pet. 2.4. as “*tartarus*” (*hell* in the A.V.) to await final judgment and sentence. “*Tartarus*”, its only occurrence in the Bible, is not hell or Hades. It is the term employed in Greek mythology to describe the prison of the Titans, semi gods who rebelled against the chief gods and were overthrown. It was said to be situated as far below Hades as Hades was below earth. It is a condition of existence rather than a place and is probably synonymous with the “abyss” or “bottomless pit” of Revelation and the “deep” of Luke 8.31. To the Bible student it is obvious that the myth of the Titans is a traditionary reminiscence of the historical event recorded in Genesis 6, especially so in that these Titans were said to have been the offspring of Uranus the heaven-

god and Gea the earth goddess, just as the *nephilim* of Gen. 6 were the offspring of the celestial sons of God and the terrestrial daughters of men.

It may be taken then that Peter is saying in this text that after his death Christ preached to the imprisoned fallen angels. Where and in what manner did He do this?

It has often been suggested that this “preaching” was by force of example, that the imprisoned spirits, witnessing our Lord’s loyalty to the Father while on earth, observing his devoted life and unresisting death, and his subsequent exaltation to the highest pinnacle of celestial glory at the right hand of God, were thereby recipients of a powerful sermon in action. It is thought that thereby at least some of them might have been influenced to repentance and conversion and therefore reconciliation with God. Col. 1.20 is definite that Christ will reconcile some apostates from the celestial world in addition to men upon earth. There is therefore nothing unreasonable in this suggestion, unless it be the fact that Peter presents the preaching as being after our Lord’s death whereas the “sermon in action” would have been made largely during his life on earth before his death.

There is one factor in the text which seems to require an alternative explanation. The A.V. says He “went and preached”. The Greek is *poreutheis* which is the aorist form of the verb *poreuomai*, to go or to pass from one place to another. It implies that Christ definitely went to the imprisoned spirits for the purpose of this preaching. The A.V. rendering of the text is not so accurate as it ought to have been; “*quickened by the spirit: by which*” should be “*in the spirit, in which*”; it is so rendered by every reputable translation aside from the A.V. Perhaps the N.E.B. has it best “*in the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits*”. The Greek word *en* properly means “in” but not “by means of”. For the more scrupulous the literal rendering of the Greek text is “*....being put to death flesh but being made alive spirit, in which also to the spirits in prison having gone, he preached*”.

Our Lord was in the grave three days. On the third day He rose from the dead. It was only then that He was “made alive spirit”. Only then did He resume his former spiritual glory and re-enter the world He left at the commencement of his humanity. Only after that time, the time of his

resurrection, could the statement in this text be true. It is at least possible that after his resurrection, perhaps after He left his disciples and ascended to the Father, our Lord did in fact go to the spirits in prison and proclaim his evangel to them. Perhaps at that point they did for the first time have the door of salvation through repentance opened.

If that be the truth of the matter, then there is an analogy with the position of humankind. After many long centuries of the power of sin, “having no hope and without God in the world”, the people who walked in darkness perceived a great light. The Light of the world came to them and proclaimed the way of salvation. Is it not feasible to suppose that at the same time the same Light would be sent to those angelic sons of God who likewise had walked in darkness over much the same period of time? The judgment of both men and angels is to take place simultaneously in the day of the Church’s triumph (1 Cor. 6.1-3). Maybe this present Age and the future Messianic Age constitute a period in which not only men, but angels, have the grace of God offered to them by his messenger, and can, if they will, turn from sin to serve the living God.

AOH



The Angels came to Jesus

Matthew 4:11(KJV) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, **angels** came and ministered unto him.

Luke 22:43 (KJV) And there appeared an **angel** unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Bible Students Fellowship Conference
Tuesday 11–Sunday 16 August 2015
High Leigh Conf. Centre
Hoddesdon
England

THE SECOND ADVENT

The Second Advent of Christ is for the completion of the work of His First Advent. He came then, to seek and to save that which was lost—fallen man, in bondage to sin and estranged from God. He died on the Cross, a Ransom for all, and by that death secured the power to recall every member of the human race from the death state, into which they pass of necessity in consequence of sin. The task of awakening those dead ones and bringing them back to perfection and everlasting life is reserved for His Second Advent.

When Jesus left His disciples He promised them that He would come again. On the Mount of Olives He had a long conversation with them in which He outlined the signs which would indicate the time of His return, and He exhorted them, and those that should follow after them, to be ever watchful and expectant. Throughout all ages since then there have always been the watchers, waiting and longing for His coming.

Although Jesus promised that He would be with His disciples in spirit throughout the Age (“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”) it is clear that when He spoke of His return He referred to a personal coming, a departure from the Heavenly courts and the presence of His Father, and coming to this world which was the scene of His earthly life. It is equally clear that he does not return in the flesh, as a man, in the fashion of His First Advent, for He is a man no longer. He returns a spiritual being, the “express image of the Father’s person,” and hence at His return is normally invisible to human sight.

At His return He sets up His Kingdom on the earth and assumes control of earth’s affairs, having associated with Him the members of His Church, His devoted followers of this Age. His ruling power will be exercised through faithful men of God of old, the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets, raised from the dead to be guides and counsellors to humanity. During the whole period of Christ’s reign over the earth evil will be restrained, death, except as the penalty for wilful sin, will cease, and men be encouraged to come to Jesus in full repentance and conversion, so receiving everlasting life.

Those signs which Jesus described are being seen today. A widespread conviction exists among many Christian believers that we are living in the time of which Jesus spoke and that His revelation to men is an imminent event. The present distress of nations is a herald of the Second Advent.

AOH

VISITED BY THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

HAGAR	Gen. 16: 7-14	
ABRAHAM & ISAAC	Gen. 22:11-18	Twice on Moriah ?
JACOB (dream)	Gen. 31:11,13, Hosea 12:3-4	Angel of God
MOSES at the bush	Exo. 3: 1-4	
MOSES	Exo. 14: 19	at the pillar
MOSES	Acts 7: 38	on the mount
BALAAM	Num. 22. 22-35	Balaam, the Donkey, & the Angel
JOSHUA	Josh. 5: 13-15	Captain of the Lord's host
GIDEON	Judges 6: 11-23	
MANOAH	Judges 13: 2-25	
DAVID	1 Chron. 21: 15-17	The destroying angel
ELIJAH	1 Kings 19: 5-7	& 2 Kings 1:3,15
HEZEKIAH	2 Kings 19: 35	& Assyrians
NEBUCHADNEZ-ZAR	Dan. 3.25,28	& Fiery Furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego
DANIEL	Dan. 6.22	& lions' den
ZECHARIAH	Zech. 1:11-12	& 3:1-6, 12:8
NATION OF ISRAEL	Isa. 63.9	Angel of His Presence
JOSEPH (in dreams)	Matt. 1:20,24	& 2:13, 2:19
SHEPHERDS, THE	Luke 2:9-13	See front cover
SON of MAN, THE	John 1: 51	The angels of God
PHILIP	Acts 8:26	Re the Ethiopian eunuch
PETER	Acts 12: 7-10	In prison
HEROD	Acts 12: 23	
PAUL	Acts 27: 23	On the ship
JOHN	Rev. 22: 6	On Patmos

JT

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

(John 1. 14)

These words commence the verse considered by some to be the greatest in the New Testament. John identifies the One who is the Word in the second verse. He “was in the beginning with God.” The evangelist thus clearly demonstrates the pre-human existence of Jesus, and accordingly quotes the Baptist (v.30) having declared that “he (the Word) was (that is to say, “existed”) before me”, although, in fact, John the Baptist was born six months earlier. Paul’s words in Phil. 2:7 demonstrate that He who was the Word with God “was made in the likeness of men”, and in Rom. 8:3 “in the likeness of sinful flesh” statements which are supported by Psa. 8:5 (Heb. 2:7) “made him a little (‘for a little while’) lower than angels”.

Although our initial text declares that the Word was made flesh, John shows that there was uniqueness about this One in that John and others “beheld his glory, the glory as of an only son of a father, full of grace and truth”, which wording other translations support. There is much here that calls for close attention. First, the A.V. does not show that John is using a human illustration, and it translates the Greek word “monogenes” literally as “only begotten”, whereas the main sense of the word is “only”. This is seen in the following passages where the A.V. translates by the word “only”, omitting “begotten”. The passages are Luke 7:12 “only son”; 8:42. “only daughter”; and 9:38 “only child”. Just as an only child is the sole reflection of his father’s characteristics, so the Word made flesh reflected the glory of His Father.

How shall we define “glory”? It is as difficult as endeavouring to define beauty. We see a sunset and we exclaim it is beautiful, even glorious. We see a flower and exclaim, how beautiful! We gaze on a young child’s countenance and we say the same thing. But John expends his reference to our Saviour’s glory in the expressions that follow—“full of grace and truth”, and in verse 17 uses the words “grace and truth” a second time: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”. Paul wrote of the same contrast in 2 Cor. 3:7-10: “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of

condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth". John, of course, does not write of the Mosaic covenant having glory as does Paul, and we shall come back to John's contrast later, and also consider further "grace and truth".

Meantime, we quote verse 16: "And of his fulness have all we received (or 'drawn upon'), and grace for grace". Fulness is the same word that Paul used in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. We read "In him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (Deity) bodily (Col. 2:9) and the same writer tells of his prayer for believers that they might "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"—partakers of His divine nature even now. In adding "and grace for grace", John seems to be saying that the more we know Christ, the more wonderful He becomes. The longer we journey with Him, the more wonderful He is, and more of His loveliness we discover. And this reminds us of Peter's exhortation (2 Pet. 3:18) "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of...Jesus Christ".

We examine verse 17 further: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". The contrast is significant. At Sinai God was the Lawgiver but through Jesus He has become Father. Freedom has displaced slavery and bondage. Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.

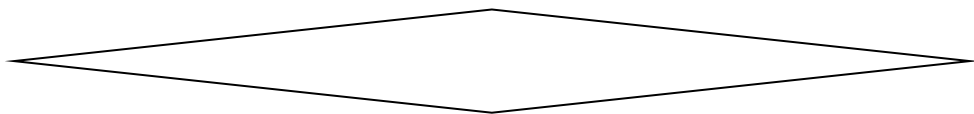
Grace: It means that which is entirely undeserved. Saved by grace and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God—neither earned nor achieved by ourselves. Grace stresses both the helpless poverty of mankind and the limitless loving-kindness of God—for in Jesus we are confronted with the sheer loveliness of God.

Truth is the second quality. Twenty-five times John uses this word in his gospel. If we think of truth only in terms of doctrines, we miss the many significances of this wonderful word. Jesus is the embodiment of the Truth. "I am the truth", He said (14:6). Throughout the ages men have been trying to define just who and what God is. But we can look at Jesus and say "That is what God is like". Jesus did not come to earth merely to talk about God but in Himself to show what God is like. This is what John

means in verse 18: “No man has seen God at any time”. God’s only Son hath declared, or literally, interpreted Him; and this because Jesus “is in the bosom of the Father”. This expresses the deepest intimacy, complete and uninterrupted. In writing these words “the bosom of the Father” John must have recalled his own loving and intimate relationship with Jesus, for in 13:23: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved”.

Jesus is the communicator of the truth—of the reality of God. He told Pilate that the object of His coming into the world was to witness to the truth—to God’s realness (18:37). He told some believers that if they continued in His word, they would know the truth which would make them free (8: 31,32) and verse 34 shows that He was talking about freedom from the bondage of sin. Christ the Truth delivers those who are captives to sin. Thus in 3:21 we have a remarkable expression when John writes “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”. This shows that truth is something that must be known by the mind, accepted with the heart, and acted out in the life.

Forest Gate Monthly



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 of men shall be put away for ever.

Gone from us

Stephen Charcharos (Jamaica)

LIVING WITH JESUS

There are some lines from an old hymn that say:

“Living with Jesus a new life divine;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine -
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am thine.”

And if we’re going to live with Jesus, then one of the first things we must do is to follow the instructions given in Romans 12: 2 “*Stop always trying to adjust your life to the world’s ways*” (Barclay). The world is in opposition to God, the world which tries to make us forget God and to abandon His standards but we have something that will help us overcome the world’s pressures and that is Faith.

Faith, according to the definition given in Cruden’s Concordance, is a dependence on the veracity of another: a firm belief or trust in a person, thing, doctrine or statement. Saving faith is the acceptance by our intellect, affection and will, of God’s favour extended to man through Christ. Paul says that it’s a faith which works by love: a living trust in God’s grace that expresses itself in acts of love. (Gal. 5: 6)

Faith gives us a defense against the evils in the world. All around us there are the pressures of worldly standards, desires and motives. We’re surrounded by the attractive appeals of wrong things: we’re continually subjected to temptation, both from within ourselves and from outside sources that are a part of the world, and a society which is not interested in, or is even openly opposed to, God. But we do have complete protection from these temptations if we follow the instructions and “*Take up the shield of faith, with which you (we) can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions.*” Eph. 6: 16-18 (NIV) . This reminds us that we’re in a spiritual battle and that it must be fought in God’s strength, depending on Him and His word.

The apostle John defines the faith, which is our defence, as the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. As long as we believe this and trust and remember that our Lord said that He would always be with us, then we have a strength to endure the attacks of the world.

Paul tells us to : *“Live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you into His Kingdom to share His glory.”* (1 Thess. 2: 12 NLT).

Our human lives are full of things which try to take away our faith and make our lives an unworthy tribute to God and the adversary uses every one of them to weaken our resolve and try to make us give up. There are the sorrows, sometimes such as to be beyond our understanding. The disappointments that try to rob us of our hopes and our dreams. And for many of us there are the constant failures in life which try to make us feel that any further effort is useless. But we should remember that our Lord went through all these things Himself and if we remember this our faith becomes a shield which quenches the darts of doubt and keeps the enemy at bay.

The world did its worst to Jesus. It harassed and slandered Him. It called Him a heretic, a sinner and a friend of sinners. It judged Him, tried Him, crucified and buried Him. It did everything it could to break Him and eliminate Him—and in spite of everything the world did to Him—IT FAILED. After the cross there came the resurrection: after the shame there came the glory. That is the Jesus who is always with us. Our Lord told His disciples *“I have overcome the world,”* and if we truly believe in Jesus as the Son of God then by that faith we too will overcome the world.

But faith doesn't stop there. If we are truly walking with Jesus, we too must be willing to risk apparent failure in the eyes of the world and even to remain secure in His love when we're misunderstood by others. Faith is trusting in God and our Lord Jesus and there's an old hymn which exhorts us to trust and obey. It's only when we've learned the faith and obedience which leaves all consequences with God that we can really appreciate His power and experience the deep joy of His love for us.

That obedience must lead to action and James tells us that if faith doesn't lead to deeds it's a lifeless emotion (Jas. 2: 17). Faith in Jesus Christ does not promote a lazy religious attitude. It must grow into a vigorous relationship with God and His dear Son. A relationship which allows us to walk with Jesus in a way that our heavenly Father would consider worthy.

But although we cannot come to the Father unless we have faith and trust in Jesus as the Son of God, there is something that is even greater than our faith. 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV) tells us: *“Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”* This love is the Agape love. These graces of Faith, Hope and Love which are to abide in us need knowledge as their foundation stones. There can be neither faith nor hope without knowledge and it most definitely a fact that there can be no Agape love without a knowledge of God’s intention to rescue the world from sin and death. It’s the realization that we have this knowledge that makes us long for the companionship of Jesus every day, and find his resurrection power working in us all the time.

These graces of faith, hope and love develop in us when the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. Paul says: *“But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, it will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* (Gal. 5:22).

These fruits are the manifestation of the love which our Heavenly Father shows towards us and are the characteristics by which we, through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling in us, should be recognized. Fruit is produced to be eaten, not for display, or to be admired. People around us are starving for Love, Joy, Peace and all the other Graces of the Spirit, and when they find them in our lives, and see them in our behaviour, they realize that we have something that they would like to have. We don’t bear fruit for our own use, we bear it so that others may feed and be helped and so that our Heavenly Father may be gloried.

Paul also wrote that we must clothe ourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends us. Remember, the Lord forgave us, so we must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing we must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony (Col. 3.12-14).

The Christian who behaves like this becomes the Light that shines on the earth with a ray of the Glory of Heaven. The Salt that brings flavour into people’s bitter lives and silently keeps society from corruption.

Jesus told us that; “*You can’t get grapes from a thorn bush,*” and He also said that “*If someone wants good fruit they must go to a good tree,*” which means that it’s not much good telling someone what Jesus said we must do, or how he said we should behave, if we don’t give an example to others by our own behaviour all the time. After all, we’re told that a picture is worth a thousand words when you want to describe something to anyone.

Our Lord Jesus said; “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me. “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask for any request you like, and it will be granted! My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.” (John 15.1-8 NLT) The gardener, our Heavenly Father, only allows those branches which bear fruit to remain on the vine, everything else He cuts off.

And what is fruit? The term implies something which requires a long developmental process, and which is therefore lasting and permanent. It’s something that the branch bears,—not for itself, but for the owner:—something that’s to be gathered. True the branch draws sap from the vine in order to grow stronger and thicker, but this is only so that the branch can fulfil its purpose of bearing the fruit, which is a process of development in each one of us: and the produce of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is lasting and permanent. Fruit is a visible expression of the power of the Holy Spirit working, secretly, within us: while the nature of the fruit is evidence of that power at work within us. However the Gardener’s not satisfied to leave the vine just bearing fruit. He prunes all the fruit-bearing branches so that they will produce MORE fruit, and this is a continuous process throughout our lives because, as the Lord says, “My true disciples bear much fruit,” which shows us that as we grow in Him our fruit bearing increases until we bear the nine-fold fruit that Paul wrote about. The fruit bearing that brings great glory to the Father.

But just as all the pruning in the world can't make the tree produce good fruit unless it has the right growing conditions. So spiritual fruit can only grow in a climate blessed with an abundance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. The vine needs good light to produce fruit bearing branches. The dark places produce unfruitful branches: strange weaknesses, distortions, immaturity, indirection, failures in practical life and conduct. So, if we're to bear all kinds of precious fruit, each in its rightful season, we must trustfully and joyfully lay open our whole being to the full expanse of God's light shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on to tell us that we should "walk in the Spirit," and it's our privilege to be able to walk in the full light, to have our whole life being instructed and illuminated. But to take full advantage of this privilege we must keep in step with the Lord Jesus. We shouldn't try to run ahead, neither should we lag behind, because our Heavenly Father knows what we need for our spiritual development, and He knows just how quickly or slowly, we can absorb what He supplies for that development.

Now a non-believer judges the quality of our Lord's fruit by the behaviour of those who claim to be Christian, not just their words. So, if we fail to show those fruits of the Spirit, which have been developed in us through the Holy Spirit's working, by not giving understanding, kindness, sympathy, or even just a friendly word—however low or ill we may feel in ourselves, or whatever we may think of the person to whom we're talking—we're letting down our Lord.

There is a tale to illustrate this about an old man, Gobi, with poor old and mended clothes, who started to go to a church every day at noon to the curiosity of the local curate, whom he told he had come in to pray to his Friend Jesus. Suddenly the old man stopped coming. Eventually the curate discovered he was in hospital. The other old men there were grumpy and used bad language. The nurses noticed how Gobi did not. After a fortnight the mood and language on the ward improved. Gobi attributed it to his Friend Jesus who visited him every day.

This story raises a few self-examination questions. For instance, can we honestly say that our normal behaviour is like Gobi's? Would it influence a worldly non-believer sufficiently to cause them to change their way of life or even to modify any colorful language they might use? Can we

honestly say that God would consider that our behaviour is worthy of Him?

If we were the judges instead of God, could we sincerely and truthfully say that the way we're living our lives is really what should be expected of someone who says that they want to share Christ's glory? Gobi trod a different path than that used by the world. He marched, as they say, to a different drumbeat, but he was guided by his friend Jesus as he made his way along that pathway, and, as a result of his close association with his friend, he reflected our Lord's glory to those around him.

Now our Lord is asking us to walk along a different road. It's a strange and narrow way, but He never sends us on ahead along a strange pathway alone. He has already blazed a clear way through every thicket and wood. Like the Good and Faithful shepherd that He is, He goes ahead of His sheep and then calls softly, "Follow Me. Let's go on together, you and I". He has been everywhere that we're called upon to go. His feet have trodden down a clear track through every experience that comes to us. It may not always be a smooth path or even a level one, in fact it's more likely to be a rough one, but He knows each road and knows it well.

He knows the valley road of disappointment with its dark shadows that are so intimidating, but he, who in the first chapter of his gospel verse nine the apostle John called: "*The true light that gives light to every man*" (NIV) is forever with us, always near at hand to still our fears and to show a guiding light for our next step.

He has known the steep pathway of temptation, down through the rocky ravines and slippery gullies, where we only need to let our eyes stray away from our goal, just take one false step, and we could fall but Isaiah tells us that God has said: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand". (Isa. 41.10 NIV) So, if we trust in Him, He will hold our hand and will guide us, guarding us from all dangers.

There are the narrow pathways of pain and sorrow, with thorny bramble bushes on each side, which cut, sting and leave wounds that seem as though they will never heal. He's travelled this way many times and

understands our worries and our pains, but Psalm 147. 3 (NIV) says, that: *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”*. So He will always be there to share our load of sorrows and His healing hands will soothe away our anguish.

David stated: *“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”* (Psa. 23.1-3 NIV). So we can be sure that even along the old, dusty, well beaten track of dull and common place daily routine, when we feel that we should be being used for better, higher things, He will be there because every one of these paths He’s trodden and glorified, and He’ll patiently and lovingly walk them again with each one of us. The only safe way to travel along the narrow way that leads to eternal life is with Him at our side. To trust Him and to let Him be in control of our lives.

Trust in Jesus and our heavenly Father should result in a willingness to let them do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Barclay says, “The first beatitude means, O the bliss of the man who has realized his own utter helplessness and has put his whole trust in God, for by this alone can he render to God the perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.” When we have this understanding, our thoughts will be stirred to a greater determination and earnestness every day as we look for the opportunities for us to grow into Christ’s image. And this urgency to grasp every opportunity is very important because every day that passes brings us nearer to the time when the Body of Christ will be complete, and when it is, the opportunities will never occur again.

When we live our lives with Jesus we will, as Gobi did, radiate His love to all who come into contact with us. This is true of all fruitful discipleship. If the love of Jesus is in our hearts, people around us will soon see it: it will be seen in our bearing, in our disposition, the way we honour God and in the way we treat our fellowmen.

The Psalmist reminds us that the LORD is our strength. The LORD is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer our God is our rock, in whom I take refuge, He is our shield and the horn of our salvation, our stronghold. (Psa. 18: 1-2)

So! May we be a channel of our Lord's peace and, as we walk the narrow way, may we reflect the light of Christ's love by the way we show love to others and may we all be united as one company linked by His golden cord of love. And may our lives be lived in a way that He will consider worthy of those who are to share His glory. RJH

Angels Don't Stay Long

*If an angel stopped by-what would you say?
How would you pass—that time of day?
For angels and humans live so far apart.
What it comes down to, is mostly the heart.*



*Angels live in a grand heavenly domain,
Every human desire, they do really disdain:
Their minds and their hearts are set on God's things,
They're so different, and not just because they have wings.*

*Have you noticed, in scripture, their visits are short?
When they come to the earth, to give a report ;
They're so very prompt, and straight to the point,
Their feet, they never do set out of joint-*

*For angels tread only where they have to go,
You will rarely—if ever—see one below;
What a lesson they give us, so obedient they are,
As they shine for God's glory—each one a bright star.*

Rosemary Page

*"I have loved thee, I have loved thee.
With an everlasting love,
And with lovingkindness drawn thee,
Watched thee from My throne above,
I will keep thee every day,
Guard thy footsteps all the way." Selected*

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