

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## "I Am the Vine--Ye Are the Branches"

John 15:1-11, 15

THE APOSTLE gives this as one of our Lord's discourses following the Memorial Supper on the last night of his earthly life. It was probably suggested by the drinking of the "cup," representing the blood of the New Covenant, and may have been uttered after Judas had gone out, and before the Lord and the eleven went to Gethsemane. Or it may have been suggested by the vineyards which they passed on their way to Gethsemane. Or possibly it may have been suggested by the great golden vine over the door of the golden gate of the temple (the "Beautiful Gate"), which Josephus says was *very* large and "had clusters as long as a man." Another writer says, "Leaves and buds were wrought of gleaming reddish gold, but its clusters of yellow gold, and its grape-stones of precious stones." The moon being at its full would display this vine to good effect. The statement of chapter 18:1, "When Jesus had spoken these words He went forth with His disciples," seems to favor the first supposition. This view would imply a considerable tarrying in the upper room after the Supper was ended, probably to near midnight after our Lord said, "Arise, let us go hence." - John 14:31.

"I am the *true* vine," institutes a comparison, and suggests to the mind a counterfeit or false vine; and this reminds us of the fact that our Lord, through this same writer, subsequently explained that there would be 'two harvests-a gathering of the fruit of the true Vine, and subsequently a gathering of the clusters of the "vine of the earth." (Rev. 14:18-20.) If, as we shall see, the true Vine represents the true Church, then the vine of the earth represents a false church, an untrue, ungentle one. ,

The heavenly Father is the husbandman who planted, who owns, who cares for the true Vine, and to Him it yields its fruit. The word "husbandman" here-does not signify merely caretaker, but rather the vineyard-owner. This is in accordance with all the presentations of Scripture: God is therein set forth as the author of man's hope, his Savior, through whom alone comes the deliverance from sin and death. The fact that God accomplishes this through an honored Agent and Representative, His beloved Son, and the further fact that He proposes to use an elect Church as a Royal Priesthood, under His, Son, the appointed Chief Priest, does not alter the fact that He Himself is the fountain from which proceeds every good and every perfect gift. - 1 Cor. 8:6; James 1:17.

"Every branch in Me," should not be understood to signify every nominal Christian, every professor, nor even those who render a nominal assent to 'the facts of Christianity, and who are in sympathy therewith. The "*justified*" believer is just ready to *become* a branch in the Vine, but his

faith, and justification by that faith, do not make him a branch. The 'branches are those only who have first taken the step of justification through faith, and who' subsequently have presented themselves to God as living sacrifices, and thus by consecration have been "immersed into Christ" by being "immersed into His death."

This procedure, by which we are inducted into *membership in Christ* (as branches of the Vine), is clearly expressed by the Apostle in Rom. 6:3-5. Be it noted that we, no more than the Apostle, are here making an immersion in water the condition of entry into the Body of Christ (as our Baptist brethren mistakenly do); but we are insisting, as the Apostle insists, that none enter the Body of Christ except by the immersion of their wills into the will of Christ -- their consecration to be dead with Him--a self-surrender as justified human beings to death and to be henceforth new creatures in Christ Jesus, under and controlled by Him, as their Head or Guide in all things.

Amongst those who thus, according to divine arrangement, now become branches of the true Vine, there are two classes--fruit-bearing branches and non-fruit-bearing branches known as "suckers." But both of these conditions are developments: every branch, begins as a very small shoot; every branch develops leaves; every branch has the same opportunities for nourishment, sap from the main stem, Christ, and from the same rout of divine purpose and promise. All the branches of the Vine have *a tendency* -- to spend their strength upon themselves -- in branch making rather than in fruit-producing, and yet there is a difference. Vine-dressers tell us that they can very early discern the fruit-buds on the proper branches, and that the suckers lack these fruit buds.

Just so it is with the Lord's consecrated people; He does not expect of them much and fine fruit immediately, but He does look for the buds or evidences of effort in the direction of fruit-bearing; and these fruit-buds will manifest themselves early in those, who are proper branches of the true Vine. And those who do not manifest a desire to bring forth fruitage to the Lord's glory, by serving Him and His cause, but who on the contrary make use of the knowledge and blessings derived through union with Christ simply to advance themselves before men, and make a fair show in the flesh, are counted unworthy of retention, and are cut off, taken away -- cease to be recognized in any sense of the word as branches. They may retain their freshness, green leaves, etc., for quite a little time after being rejected of the Lord, but it is only a question of time until they lose every evidence of fidelity--they wither away. Nor does the fact that they were branches avail anything after they cease to be branches, for the wood of the vine is of no practical value. They are burned, destroyed.

But as even the best branches in the vine, which give evidence of fruit-bearing, require pruning, so even the most honest and earnest of the Lord's people require the Lord's discipline and providential care--otherwise they might soon run to wood making also, and fail to bring forth much fruit. The husbandman's skill recognizes how much of the branch and sprout and leaf are necessary to the bringing forth and proper maturing of the fruit which he seeks, and so our heavenly Father knows perfectly the conditions, etc., most favorable to us that we may bring forth much good fruit. He sees the sprouts of our ambitions in various directions, and knows, as we do not, whereunto these might lead us; and by His providence nips in -the bud many of our propositions, deeming it better that the strength and energy which we thus intend to put forth should be expended rather in other directions--in bringing to maturity our good fruits already started and in progress.

The true child of 'God whose will has been entirely immersed into the will of the Lord is neither offended nor discouraged by these prunings. He has learned something at least of his own unwisdom, and has confidence in the wisdom of -the great Husbandman; hence when divine

providence stops his efforts in some directions he takes the thwarting of his plans joyfully, assured that the Lord's will and the Lord's way are the best, and intended to work out a blessing.

As the Father's representative, Jesus had been keeping the first branches of the Vine. He had purged or pruned by His reproofs or counsels, so that now, at the close of His three and a half years' ministry, He could say, "Now ye are clean through the word [teaching] which I have spoken unto you." As He again said, in His prayer to the Father, "Those that Thou gayest Me I have kept [as branches, disciples, members], and none of them is lost save the son of perdition." But henceforth, as the same prayer expressed the matter, the pruning and care of the branches would not be done by our Lord Jesus in the same manner, but through the operation of the Holy Spirit -the Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

But it is not sufficient that we be first justified, and then sanctified 'through a consecration to the Lord; nor is it sufficient that we get into the Body of Christ and become branches of the Vine. It is good to be a little shoot, it is good to have buds of promise, it is good to grow as a branch and put forth tendrils, but however large or small the branch may be, however old or young, we must remember that the sap which produces the fruit can be obtained only *by continued* union, with the Vine and its root of promise. If ever separated, all hopes must wither. Only as we are in Christ, and through Him heirs of God, have we part or lot in this matter and- only so can we bring forth the fruits which the great Husbandman seeks. It would be folly for the branch to say, I needed at first to be united with Christ the Vine, but now I can stand alone. Whoever stands alone, whoever is separated from the Vine and from the other branches, will speedily wither away; and whoever abides in the Vine must surely continue to have *fidelity* to the Vine, must be at one with all the other true branches of the same Vine. And here we see -the importance of being in the *true* Vine and atone with the *true* branches.

The wrong thought on this subject of the Vine and the branches is frequently expressed by our friends of various denominations, who claim that the' branches of the Vine are the various denominations of Christians. This inculcates a serious error, namely, that it is the duty of every individual Christian to get into membership in one of these branches-as for instance, the Presbyterian branch, or the Methodist branch, or the Lutheran branch, or the Roman Catholic branch, or the Greek Catholic branch. The correct thought, on the contrary, is that each individual Christian in consecrating himself to the Lord becomes an individual branch in the *true* Vine: and his labors thenceforth should be not to bring forth denominational and sectarian fruits, but to bring forth the fruits or graces of the spirit of God in, his own character and life.

One writer, in pursuing this wrong thought respecting the branches, says, "God does not desire to have fruitless churches large and prosperous; he lets them wither away. The churches that keep nearest to Christ will grow the fastest." It should not be difficult for any to discern the fallacy of such, reasoning. If this -were the correct view it would imply that the church organizations which are the largest in numbers and most prosperous in wealth and honor amongst men are those which have the most truth and which most directly receive the sap of the Holy Spirit from the Lord. But let us see: amongst Christians this would constitute Roman Catholicism the holiest and best and nearest to the Lord; Greek Catholicism would claim to be second; Methodism third, and so on. Intelligent people scarcely need to have the fallacies of such an interpretation pointed out.

But what is incongruous when applied to denominations as branches, is thoroughly logical and in harmony with the facts when applied to the individual Christian and his spiritual life. Those who abide in Christ in faith and trust and consecration to His service -- to the bringing forth of the fruits which are pleasing in the sight of the great Husbandman -- find themselves in a narrow way indeed, often hedged up by providence, and their efforts in various directions changed, or rather

their intentions thwarted; but they find, as a result of all this experience, rightly received, that they are growing in grace -- in the knowledge and in the love of God, the fruits of the spirit. Rom. 8:28.

The close union between the Vine and the branches is brought to our attention by our Lord's words, "He that abideth in Me and I in him:" the Vine and its branches have such a oneness that wherever we touch a branch we touch the Vine itself. It is one Vine *composed of* branches, and so is the Body of Christ one body, composed of many members. Wherever a member or branch of the Body of Christ is found, all the various characteristics of Christ Himself are found -- in spirit, in intention, as "new creatures." This oneness in Christ is the secret of the power and of the fruitbearing and of the acceptableness of the branches with the Father, the Husbandman.

"Without Me ye can do nothing," is a statement well worthy of being deeply engraved in the heart of every truly consecrated member of the Body of Christ. But to abide in Christ means to be subject to all the will of the great Husbandman, and gladly and meekly submit to all the prunings which His Wisdom sees best to permit. Respecting this -necessity for pruning and discipline, Trench, the celebrated theologian, has well said:

"It fares exactly so with God and some of His elect servants. Men seeing their graces, which so far exceed the graces of common men, wonder sometimes why they should suffer still, why they seem to be ever falling from one trial to another. But He sees in them what no other eye can see - the grace which is capable of becoming more gracious still; and in his far-looking love for His own, who shall praise Him, not for a day, but for an eternity, He will not suffer them to stop short of the best whereof they are capable. They are fruit-bearing branches, and just because they are such, He prunes them that they may bring forth more fruit."

Remarking upon the fact that sometimes a vine or tree may attempt more fruit than it is capable of bringing to perfection, and likening this to Christian experience and efforts, another writer (H. L. Hastings) suggests:

"The best way is to *shake the tree*, and free it of extra fruit. Prune, clip, cut, pluck, and reduce the fruit, until it becomes manageable, and until the tree can support its burden, and then let every branch be loaded with fruit that comes to perfection, but not *overloaded with* fruit which never will reach its full development."

This is a very correct thought, as relates to the fruitage of efforts put forth in the Lord's service on behalf of others; for many waste their efforts because they do not concentrate them sufficiently.

The talented Apostle Paul gives his testimony as - to the wisdom of shaking off some of our plans and arrangements and -efforts for which we have little talent, and concentrating our efforts upon those which we can best bring to perfection, ripeness, saying, "This one thing I do." (Phil. 3:13.) The Apostle's one business in life was to be, so far as he was able, acceptable "to the Lord personally, and to do with his might what he could to assist others into the same condition. But the fruit-bearing of works for others we do not understand to be the principal thought in this lesson. The first thought is that we should have the fruits of the Lord's spirit in our own hearts, the graces of the spirit well developed. This, however, implies activity and self-sacrifice in the Lord's service, for only so by the- Lord's arrangement can our personal fruits and graces be brought to - maturity.

Our Lord gives us an intimation that the growing of much fruit is not wholly dependent upon ourselves, and that even while we abide in Him as fruit-bearing branches, the quality and quantity

of the fruit is to be improved by our having proper ideals before our minds, and earnestly seeking their realization.

Thus He says, "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." The intimation is, that the desire and the asking of the Father at the throne of the heavenly grace is a means by which we may more and more receive of the sap of the Vine, the Holy Spirit, and be enabled to develop the fruits of the Spirit. It will be noticed that nothing here implies the seeking or finding of earthly good things. These are to be left wholly to the Lord's wisdom and providence, and His people, the true branches of the Vine, are to desire and to seek for the Holy Spirit, which the Father is more willing to give to them than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. - Luke 11:13.

Incidentally the Lord here points out the value of the Scriptures to His true branches or disciples, when He says, "If My words abide in you." It is not only necessary and proper that we seek divine grace, but it is equally proper that we avail ourselves of the divine revelation respecting what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God our Father, the Husbandman of the true Vine. Hence it will be found that those who bear much fruit and good fruit not only have been justified through faith, and sanctified through consecration, and thus accepted into membership in the true Vine, but that additionally they are seeking to be fruit-bearers -- seeking to abide in the Vine, and to have all the characteristics of the true Vine, seeking grace to help in every time of need, and availing themselves not only of the sap which flows through the roots, but also of the light of truth and of grace which shines upon them through the Word of the Lord. And only by following these conditions can we be fruit-bearers, and only by being bearers of fruit can we be the Lord's disciples-to the end; for we are to remember that the Church of the present time is merely the probationary Church, a company of those who have professed loyalty, love, and obedience. The Lord will bring testing to prove the sincerity of their professions, and only those who thus prove the sincerity of their professions will be accepted as members of the Church glorified, symbolized by the golden vine of the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

Our Lord would have all the true branches realize His love, His interest, His care for them, His desire that they might make their calling and their election sure by compliance with the conditions of membership in the Vine: hence He assures them of His love in the strongest possible language. He tells them that His love for them is of the same kind as the Father's love for Him. Even with all the various evidences of the truthfulness of this statement, corroborated by the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Lord's Word, it is far too wonderful for us to fully comprehend. We can readily see how and why our Lord Jesus was greatly beloved of the Father, and called His well-beloved Son, but it astounds us to know that this same love is exercised by our Lord in turn toward us. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God;" for our Lord Jesus expressed and fully manifested the Father's love. - 1 John 3:1; John 14:7.

But then comes a limitation, namely, that this intense love is only for the "little *flock*." True, "God so loved the world," and our Lord Jesus loved the world also, in the sense of sympathetic love, and, a desire to do them good. But the love which the Lord is here declaring is a different one. It is only for those who have made a full consecration to Him--indeed, that consecration is the secret of His special love. The Father loved the only begotten Son because He was full of faith and trust and obedience--"unto death, even the death of the cross. And likewise this same love extends to those justified ones who, filled with the Master's spirit, desire to walk in His footsteps, to take up their cross and follow Him. God's love, of the same kind that went out toward our dear Redeemer, goes out to all such; and the Redeemer's love goes out to them; and the good message comes to them, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "Who shall lay anything to

the charge of God's elect? It is God; that justifieth... . It is Christ that died." - 1 Cor. 3:22, 23; Rom. 8:33, 34.

But as this special love is in view of the consecration and obedience of this class, so it depends upon the continuation of that spirit of consecration and obedience. If their loving devotion grow cold, and they become filled with self-love and the spirit of the world, to that extent they grieve the Holy Spirit -- they turn from, them this special love of the Lord; and hence the injunction of your Lord, "Continue ye in My love." These words show that it is possible for us to forfeit the Lord's love and to become castaways-to fail to make sure our calling and election to the exceeding great things which God hath in reservation for them that love Him with this supreme love. - 2 Pet. 1:4-11; 1 Cor. 9:27.

It is important that we keep in mind that true love on our part will manifest itself in obedience, and hence that disobedience is an evidence of the loss. of love as viewed from the Lord's standpoint; and we must all agree that this is a reasonable standpoint of judgment. Some may say, How would it be if we disobeyed through ignorance? We answer that the-Lord has made provision against our ignorance: first, He has given us the Word of truth, "that the man of God may be perfect [perfectly informed], 'thoroughly furnished unto every good work;'" and secondly, he has promised to supply such helps in the spirit of holiness, and the understanding of His Word as will enable us to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. (2 Tim. 3:17; John 16:13.) Thus, carelessness respecting the Word of the Lord is one evidence of the lack of love. Our Lord points out that His continuance in the Father's love, as the well-beloved Son, with all that this implies, was because of His obedience to the Father's will, and that following the same line He must require that we shall be obedient to Him if we would abide in His love, share His throne and glory.

"These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might be in you, and that your joy might be filled-full." Our Lord's instructions and commandments are not intended to terrify us, nor to deprive us of happiness. On the contrary, as the most fruitful branches well know, obedience to the Lord's words, and the privilege thus obtained of abiding in Him and His love, is the greatest joy -- a joy which wholly outweighs all the trifling pleasures which the world has to offer. It is the joy and peace that passeth all understanding, which rules in the heart, and which brings with it the promise, the assurance, not only of the life which now is, but also of that which is to come.

- R2464-R2466, May 1, 1899.

## The Voice of God in Creation

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork." - Psalm 19:1.*

CREATION is the work of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, and all its contents are as far superior in beauty and usefulness to human productions as heaven is high above the earth or the infinite is beyond the finite. We have not far to go to see marvelous sights. Every blade of grass, every cloud in the sky, and every drop of water is a world of wonders., Overshadowed and encompassed by splendors and marvels manifold, let no one refuse to draw often, and largely from this inexhaustible fountain of pleasure. And may all the pleasure derived from the study of Nature be transmitted into praise, and impel us to lift our thoughts; affections, and desires to God Himself. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." The lover of Jesus Christ can therefore see the beauties of earth, and sea, and sky, as the merely natural man can never see them, aye! and enjoy them also far more fully. No sooner does any one accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, and consciously enter into the possession of a new spiritual life, than behold! Nature is seen in a new light, assumes new beauties, and acquires new significance. This is specially true of those who have the poetic element strongly developed within them, and are ardent admirers of natural things. With such, a flower, a tree, or a bird, has been enough to stir the emotions, and to elevate the mind to sublime conceptions of God. In him is the grand old prophecy remarkably fulfilled, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." - Isa. 55:12.

It was thus that Jesus preached, giving the loftiest truths embodiment in visible and common objects, for "without a parable spake He not unto the people." And even when He plainly revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom to His disciples, and did not speak in parables, yet His words were almost always clothed with simple similes and metaphors drawn from Nature. Hence the perennial freshness, beauty, and power of His teaching. He who spake as never man spake uttered 'comparatively little which was not illustrated by objects in the natural world. His Gospel is steeped in Nature. The lilies of the field-the flowers by the wayside-the fig-trees which skirted the path-the olive trees which grew on the slopes of the hills-the vine and its fruitful branches-the sparrows chirping on the housetops-the young ravens which cry-the sheep feeding on the uplands-the grain of wheat-these and many other natural objects, were the texts of a large number of the sermons He preach-, ed in the days of His flesh.

### THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy, help, and in His excellency on the sky." (Dent. 33:26.) "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." "Whither shall I go," asks the Psalmist, "from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in sheol, behold Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." (Jer. 23:24; Psa. 139:7.)

The sky is everywhere. It appears to men today just as it did to the first of our race. And so, too, God is "the same, yesterday, today, and for ever." "He is without variableness or shadow of turning." Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the worlds, even from everlasting to everlasting He is God." - James 1:17; Psa. 90:2.

The atmosphere, of our earth is constantly being corrupted by the baneful exhalations which ascend from the manifold pollutions of the earth, but the ether of infinite space is never defiled. It is as free from taint as the breath of the Eternal, and is not only pure in itself but also the great purifier. It is therefore an admirable and charming symbol of the incorruptible holiness of Deity. It speaks to us of the ineffable purity of the Holy One. His purity is perfect, yea so utterly perfect that even the holy angels veil their faces before Him and adoringly cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God; Thou only art Holy. Their holiness 'is creaturely and finite, but the holiness of God is infinitely perfect.

And yet the beauty of the sky is only a far-off shadow of the absolute beauty of God. His is the supreme Loveliness: He is lovely in His nature which is Love, lovely in His character which is perfectly holy, and lovely in all His works and ways which are unspeakably charming, harmonious and good. All His perfections are the attributes of Love, and every beautiful thing in the universe is an emanation from and a manifestation of the beauty of God. So long as the minds of men are blinded by sin and their hearts defiled by moral uncleanness, they are unable to apprehend the divine beauty, or know, a longing for the divine Love. But when they permit the eyes of their hearts to be opened by the Word and Spirit, and the fountain of their moral nature cleansed by the great Purifier, then they do see, and with ever-increasing clearness, the greatness of God's Love, and have the blissful desire awakened within them to become partakers of His Loveliness. And His love will become theirs just in proportion as they believe His Gospel, receive His Spirit, and appropriate His grace. The pure crave for purity, and loving hearts for more love. "The pure in heart shall see God," and realize ever more fully the attractiveness of the divine nature and character. Not only so, but they will also be impelled to pray, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," and as their prayer is graciously and freely answered, they themselves will become increasingly the joyful recipients of the divine love, until at last when their nature and character are perfected, they too shall be all love and altogether lovely, like the Christ of God, and God Himself. Meanwhile, as the sky enfolds every sun, planet, and star in its tender embrace, so likewise does the Divine Father put the strong arms of His compassion and power around every one of His children, and while breathing His own sweet peace into believing and loving hearts, He soothes their fears and encourages their faith, by reminding them of the assurance, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." - Deut. 33:27.

### **THE LORD GOD IS A SUN**

The natural sun is the great giver of light. When he is not shining upon our side of the globe, our hemisphere is in darkness. Even while the moon and stars look down in splendor from the firmament, it is night still. In like manner, when Christ is not known, mental darkness and gloom overshadow the human soul and spirit. Whatever else a man may know, if he knows not the Christ of God-the great Revealer -"the Wisdom of God" - he is still walking in darkness, and ignorant of all the truths and experiences which most vitally concern him as a moral and spiritual being to apprehend and realize. Being ignorant of Christ, he must necessarily be ignorant of God, for "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." And not knowing God, he does not know himself, for how can a man-rightly apprehend his own origin, nature, character, and destiny until he apprehends God? Just as the, earth is covered with gloom, when the sun is absent, so likewise must every human heart continue in spiritual darkness until it embraces Christ. But all who truly know Christ and love Him and live in the light of His Gospel can joyfully exclaim, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold -the sun." (Eccles. 11:7.) They live in a new world of beauty and blessedness since they believe the testimony of Jesus, and now not only know something of their own origin and nature,



character, and destiny, but also apprehend with a growing clearness the nature and character of God, "whom to know is life eternal."

When Jesus is received as Savior, He brings a springtime of spiritual quickening into the believing spirit. And as the believer continues to receive Him more and more fully, through the appropriation of His words and Spirit, He intensifies and develops the new life into beauty and joy, fragrance and fruitfulness. The genuine and growing Christian becomes clothed with virtues and graces, like the earth with flowers, and all of them out breathe upon the world's atmosphere the sweet and refreshing perfume of a Christ like character. He puts on moral loveliness and becomes in measure a reflection of the beauty of God. His feelings burst into praise like the joyous birds into song; all his affections open into blossom like the buds on the trees; his daily life becomes more and more fruitful in well-doing, and finds embodiment in good works as well as in holy living. His mind is spiritually enlightened, his heart purified and enlarged, and his spirit quickened into newness of life. Made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, a holy love is enkindled and intensified within him, a love which evolves as its true products all the powers and graces of the Christian life. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," and then out of that love, like the colors of the rainbow out of pure white light, there come all the virtues enumerated by Paul—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance." Thus a truly Christian life is not only spiritual in itself, but it is also a great spiritualizer, and uplifts the daily natural life into the sphere of the spiritual, by infusing Christian principle and purpose into all its doings. The secular becomes a golden cup into which, the wine of the new life is poured, and out of which not only the Christian himself, but also many others may drink for the strengthening and refreshment of their higher nature. This is the blessed life -- a life which will continue to be come more and more blessed.

### **THE PASSING SEASONS AS SYMBOLS**

Spring is the season of quickening, summer the sea. son of growth, and autumn the season of fruition -- the time of gathering and garnering the precious products of the earth.. Autumn therefore is a symbol in Nature, of old age in the sphere of the physical and of a ripe Christian experience in the realm of the spiritual. Thus the natural sun is a great glorifier. Look, for instance, at the fruit-tree in garden or orchard. In the season of spring he glorifies their quickened life,. by giving it manifestation in foliage, and buds, and blossoms. The, branches of all the blossoming trees, but especially those of the apple trees, are then like little rainbows, and the trees themselves immense bouquets. All the glowing months of summer he intensifies the life he has quickened, and thereby develops the fruit upon their branches. And then, in 'the golden days of autumn, he matures and ripens the fruit, and makes it beautiful by adorning it with the most exquisite colors. And what is true of the garden, orchard, and field is true of the whole world. The sun is a universal blessing, for "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Under his influence the face of the earth is renewed in every spring season; all its growths are developed in the long summer days, and then at last, they are fully matured, ripened, and glorified in the mellow autumn splendor. Now, just as the sun glorifies the growths of Nature, so Christ glorifies every one who lives in the sphere of the spiritual That sphere is the realm of love -- love received, love reciprocated, and love manifested. He first bestows the grace which forms and develops inward goodness, and then outwardly arrays and adorns the goodness with present and eternal, glory. Something of this spiritual splendor is visible even now, in all truly Christian men and women. And in the great hereafter it shall be seen in all its fulness and loveliness, when through the spiritual bodies of the redeemed the hidden character shall visibly outshine and clothe them with glory. The white robes of the redeemed in heaven are even now being woven in the loom of Christian character, for are we not told that ".the fine linen is the-righteous acts of the saints"? So we are matured, ripened, and glorified. Receiving the truth into the mind, His love into the heart,

and His Spirit into the spirit, we are being changed into His image as from glory to glory. The graces which shone with such perfect luster in the life of Jesus,, will also shine in ours, in proportion as we put Him on. Then these graces when perfected will form a robe of adorning, beautiful to God, to angels and to men.

The final development of spiritual life and character is beautiful. All the graces and virtues of the maturing character come into manifestation in, speech and action, and the satisfied Husbandman looks down and blesses the springing forth thereof. The ripened fruit of this life being love, it wears the crown of virtues, the perfection of grace, and the full and final development of faith. When love is so matured, then comes the harvest-the gathering and the Home-gathering of souls. The angel-reapers thrust in their sickles with rejoicing, and God's elect ones fall before them like corn fully ripe. Today there are those whose "full corn in the ear" is fast hastening on to ripeness in the autumn sunshine. Manifold infirmities it may be are creeping into the physical system, bringing weakness and pain; but instead. of fearing these "blessings in disguise," rather let them "look up and lift up their head, knowing that their [full] redemption draweth nigh." "They shall bring forth fruit in old age," and in. spirit and experience be "fat and flourishing." To all real lovers of Jesus, the last days are the happiest, the holiest, and the best.

Compiled by *J. J. Blackburn*

*From "Nature as a Book of Symbols."*

## The War Against the Seed

*"And enmity will I put between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall crush thy head, but thou shalt crush his heel." - Gen. 3:15, Rotherham.*

DURING THE years of man's history on earth there have been wars and rumors of wars. Nations have risen ' against nations, and peoples against peoples. Some of these conflicts have involved the known world of their time, and the all-out energies of people were utilized in arbitraments of the sword. In the midst of these sanguinary affairs, extending through all of them, and unnoticed by most of the world's inhabitants, there has been carried on a more extensive and vital conflict than all of the other encounters put together. This has been the war of Satan against the Woman, and of his seed against her seed. It began at Eden and for approximately sixty centuries its deadly campaigns, attacks and counter-attacks have 'proceeded. Its hostilities still continue, and until they end there will be no real peace and security on earth. But when it ends, as it soon will, with the total annihilation of Satanic forces, the way will be opened for peace on earth and good will to men.

Our text gives the declaration of war. It names the combatants, Satan and the Woman, her seed and his seed. It delineates the successful termination, resulting in the crushing of the head of Satan, the only casualties on the other side 'being injury to the heel of the Woman's Seed. From Genesis to Revelation, and in some of the pages of history we find details of the battles and affrays of this crucial engagement.

Satan, opponent of the Woman, needs no introduction to Bible Students. We are not ignorant of his, devices. We have felt his onslaughts, and with the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith oft beat off his attacks. The identification of his seed is not a matter of difficulty. Jesus, when under attack by some of this seed, who had murder in 'their hearts, said unto them, "Ye do the deeds-of your father... . Ye. are of your father the Devil and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:41,44.) Those whom He thus addressed claimed to be of Abraham's seed, and Jesus did not deny their descent from the faithful Patriarch, but He also branded them as being of the paternity of the Devil, because they performed the works of Satan and performed his evil desires. By their fruits are all identified, and murder with deceit are clearly set forth as fruits of the Satanic seed. Thus it is Satan, and those who do his works with performance of his lusts, that constitute the forces of one side of this controversy of the ages.

The Woman and her seed are not so; easily placed: God was speaking to the parties involved in the first transgression, and undoubtedly He was stating, that a descendant of Eve-a Seed of -the woman-would be used as the instrument to crush Satan's head. That descendant we know is. Jesus. He and His brethren are likewise the children of the promise, the Seed of the Covenant through which blessings will come to all the peoples of earth. No doubt it is in this larger sense that the term "woman" refers. Satan opposes the Covenant and would nullify and destroy it if possible, for he well knows that the Seed of that great, all-embracing promise of the Almighty God will bring his inglorious career to a desolating termination in due time. Thus the objectives of hiss war of the ages are brought to light. To locate the Seed, and destroy it would in the estimation of Satan nullify the Covenant, and save his evil career from untimely end.

Chapter Four of the Book of Genesis presents the record of an initial battle of the war, and well epitomizes the entire struggle. The acceptance of Abel's sacrifice by God evidently raised the suspicion, in Satan's mind that Abel was the prophesied Seed of the Woman. Cain became of the

evil one and murdered his brother. "And on account of what did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." (1 John 3:12, Diaglott.) How illustrative this is of the entire course of this war. Year after year, and century after century, there have been those who "have gone in the way of Cain," hating their brethren and persecuting those who offer acceptable sacrifices unto the Most High. Satan, the field marshal and master strategist of this lethal campaign, has directed the assaults, and with the many assassinations probably considered he was attaining his goal of safety. Maybe he thought the Covenant was nullified when Abel was slain. Maybe he thought Abel to be the one and only Seed and thus his removal brought complete victory. If so, he soon learned otherwise and wages his unholy war with increasing fury and diabolical schemes.

Chapter Six of Genesis records a change of strategy on the part of the wily deceiver. His plan would be based on this type of reasoning: The executioner must be a descendant of (the Woman according to the promise. Why not insure that the Woman would have no further descendants? Why not break the line of descent from Adam and Eve, and populate the earth with a new race receiving life from other sources? Thus came to birth the first of programs to fill the earth with human creatures uncontaminated with the Adamic fall. The sons of God (fallen angels) intermarried with the daughters of men and brought forth this new line of human creatures. They spread prolifically throughout the world and the prospect looked good to the Devil for complete extermination of the Adamic line. But the Lord's Arm was not shortened, and the flood of Noah's day marked finis to that engagement. The Seed had not been destroyed, and the Serpent with all his subtilty was still considerably in the dark as to its identity.

As the years rolled by it became clear to Satan that the promised Seed would come through Abraham, and through the chosen nation Israel. Little by little God's great Plan for the redemption of humanity and for the blessing of mankind came to light as the Prophets wrote and spoke their' God-given revelations. In those revelations the Serpent saw the finger of doom again pointing at him in the words, "Never shalt thou be any more." The usurper then centralized his efforts against Israel, hoping to destroy the nation and thus annihilate the Seed. Thus we see one of the reasons for the many vicious attempts to destroy the chosen people. There was a famine in the land of Israel. Did Satan have anything to do with it? No doubt he was back of it. That would be a quick and efficient way to wipe out Jacob and his family. But it did him no good to attempt starvation, for Joseph gave relief to the distressed family and revealed that God in His infinite way had so arranged it and "meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." - Gen. 50:20.

The King of Egypt enlisted his forces with the seed of the Serpent and issued the ruthless mandate to cast all Hebrew male children into the river. Possibly that is where some of the modern-day dictators secured ideas on race extermination. That attempt at the nation's destruction was likewise unsuccessful. No -- did Pharaoh of the hardened heart have any better success at the Red Sea. Invasions from surrounding nations, conspiracies, seductions into idolatry, persecutions of the Prophets, and other malevolent and pitiless efforts were made by the master villain of the ages to either destroy or alienate the nation from God. They were unsuccessful. True, his efforts have made the path of the righteous ones of Israel difficult and troublesome. From Abel to Zacharias they have suffered violence, but that was no victory for their ill disposed opponent. Through their adversities these faithful men' received a good report through faith, and in the Lord's due time they will be adequately rewarded for their steadfastness and loyalty.

It is reasonable that the unseen and vigilant Enemy of the Seed would be apprised of the angel's announcement to Mary that her child would be the "Son of the Highest," and that "of His Kingdom there would be no end." And Satan would reason: Here surely is the Seed of the

Promise. Here is the One commissioned to crush my head. But I'll see to it that He is eradicated first. I'll destroy Him before birth if possible, and if He is born I will arrange that He doesn't live long.

Thereupon followed the many attempts upon the life of Jesus. The suggestion was made to Joseph to have Mary put away. The wise men were steered to the throne of Herod, and the decree went forth . aimed specifically at Jesus, to kill all children of two years and under. Jesus was tempted to destroy Himself through jumping from the pillar of the temple. Mob action was instigated in his home town. Conspiracies were hatched, and the aid of Judas secured. The desired result was obtained. The Holy One, the Seed of the Promise, was led as a Lamb to 'the slaughter and crucified on Calvary. His body was placed in the tomb, the entrance sealed, and soldiers placed on guard. Now it must have appeared to the Serpent that he was victorious, and that Almighty God was defeated in the four-thousand-year battle. Peace and security were seemingly assured, and the ambition of being "like the Most High" seemed within reach.

His elation, if such there was, did not last long. New developments dampened his exultation and brought a renewal of hostilities. The resurrection of Jesus with all power given to Him must have gone far in convincing the Serpent that his cause was lost and that he had but a short time. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, and the revelations of Paul declaring that those who are of Christ's are Abraham's Seed and heirs according to the promise, gave fuel for renewed attacks and new campaigns.

This Gospel Age has been the scene of a long and continued assault upon the followers of Jesus. The Jews mercilessly persecuted their brethren who had accepted Christ. Stephen was stoned, and Saul with ravings and threats threw numbers of them into' the dungeons. Mob action, floggings, imprisonment met those who took the name of Jesus, but did not stop the onward spread of the truth and the growth of the Church. Successive waves of cruel and intolerant persecution by Pagan Rome brought torture and death to thousands. Twelve centuries of fiendish action by Papal Rome followed, but Christianity still remained. The process of selecting the promised Seed still continued.

Evidently his Satanic majesty has concluded that pain, suffering and torture will not bring recantation to the mouth of the humble followers of the Lamb, for in recent years the Lord's people have had much relief from that form of opposition. In place thereof they have been deluged with multitudes of subtle, ingenious, religious philosophies, designed to lead them from the narrow way of sacrifice into the snares and entrapments of the Adversary. The process still continues. The Lord's people divide and sub-divide. Schisms, sects and denominations grow in number, but they avail not in the triumphant progress of calling, choosing and testing of the servants of God. Through it all God's people are having indelibly impressed upon their minds that salvation is not of men, or organizations, channels or creeds, but of God and Christ Jesus. Through the war-tactics of Satan they are receiving aid in learning the lessons of faithful dependence upon their King and Redeemer. Even the wrath of Satan is causing praise of the Most High.

Thus for six thousand years this ages-lasting and global warfare has continued. What has the Serpent accomplished? The answer is: Nothing. His seeming victories have been defeats. The trials and sufferings heaped upon those comprising the Seed of the Woman have been used in qualifying them for divine service in the Ages to come.

The child of God is encouraged through knowing of the war and its battles. He realizes that Satan's fight against the brethren is a fight against God. He knows that his brother's battle is his

battle. They are cooperators in a common cause against the common Enemy. Knowing these things, he loves his brethren, not as Cain who was of Satan's seed and slew his brother, but as Jesus who laid down His life for His brethren, that they with Him might fulfil the promise, destroy the Evil One, and bring blessings to all the families of earth.

Soon the Seed will be complete, and the Serpent will feel the executioner's sword. God has said, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." - Isa. 46:11.

-O. R. Moyle.

## **Our Fellowship in Christ**

*(Continued from last issue)*

*"If there be therefore ... any fellowship of the Spirit, . . . fulfill ye my joy, that ye be ... of one accord, of one mind." - Phil. 2:1, 2.*

### **FELLOWSHIP WITH THE BRETHREN**

IN SOME respects, fellowship with the brethren is the most important part of our subject, for if it be true, as St. John elsewhere affirms, that a man who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen (1 John 4:20) it is equally, appropriate to inquire: He that does not joy in the fellowship of his brother whom he hath seen, how can he delight himself in the fellowship of the Father and of the Son whom he hath not seen?

In the first place we think fellowship should be distinguished from toleration. Toleration is not enough. Sometimes we hear the value of toleration praised in high terms, and we certainly agree that toleration is a great deal better than intolerance, but toleration is not fellowship. What sort of time would one be describing to absent friends if he told them of the wonderful way in which the friends with whom he had met in convention, had *tolerated* him! They might concede that *hee* had had a wonderful time, but in so far as the other conventioners were concerned, the report would elicit only their sympathy. It would be apparent that only by a considerable strain on their Christian forbearance had they managed to put up with him for the convention sessions. The experience would not be exactly what we would understand by the word fellowship, would it?

When the Apostle John speaks in our text of fellowship with "us," we understand that he had reference to the fellowship of spirit which exists in the Christ company-the anointed company. As St. Paul says: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." - 2 Cor. 5:16.

We are still in the flesh, each of us trying to keep the body under, and the fellowship we have is fellowship of spirit. If we meet with brethren who are striving to walk in the footsteps of Christ, handicapped as we all are by reasons of birth, education, environment, etc., the fellowship we have with them is not after the flesh, but in their attempt to grow more and more like Christ, and that is the fellowship they are looking to have with us. So, with the Psalmist we rejoice to say: "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee [O Lord] and keep Thy precepts." *We know of no other limitation to our personal fellowship.*

In Philippians 2:1, 2 the Apostle speaks of "fellowship of spirit," as quoted at the head of this article. In illustration of the Apostle's thought: Suppose one is absent from another brother in the

Lord for a year or so and that during that time he has himself been seeking to grow more like Christ, to develop more of His spirit of love, of humility, of truth. In his experience he has been trying to get more of the spirit -of holiness into his life, more of the spirit of liberty, more of the spirit of joy in bearing the fruit of the spirit, and in helping others, more of the spirit of patience, more of the spirit of peace. Suppose when he meets the other he finds that he has been striving likewise, and as a result the mellowing influence of God's Holy Spirit in him is manifest to the first, as the mellowing influence of God's Holy Spirit in the first is manifest to the second. Is there not fellowship of spirit? There is indeed. There is nothing else on earth quite like it.

This fellowship of spirit, spoken of in Ephesians 4:3 as the unity of the spirit, is a different matter from the unity or fellowship of faith. It will be recalled how the Apostle there exhorts the Church at Ephesus to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the uniting bonds of peace and a little later on in the same chapter, he points out that in order that we might come into the unity of the faith God gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. From the Apostle's viewpoint it would take the ministry of these apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, the entire Gospel Age, before we would all come into the unity of the faith. Not that it would take very long to come into the unity of the faith, so far as the fundamental items are concerned-faith in the ransom-sacrifice of Christ, the resurrection, etc.; but while all the various items of our faith are important-valuable-they are not, properly speaking, fundamental. The unity of the spirit, however, was something with which the Gospel Age *began*, and was something that the Apostle wished -the Church to keep in its midst all down through the Gospel Age while waiting for the unity of faith on minor items to develop. Some, in looking back over Church history, have been tempted to wonder if the Apostle's exhortation met with any response, and, as they see the divisions which have grown and continued to this very hour, wonder if it ever will. Dear friends, let us be assured that it did meet with a response back there in the Apostle's day, and has done so all along. Moreover, it still does amongst those who today are Christ's in deed as well as in name. Personally we are of those who believe that the Lord's true people throughout the Gospel Age have done exactly what the Apostle here exhorts; they have endeavored to keep the unity of the spirit in the uniting bonds of peace. It is true that they have found themselves at times separated by fences which others have constructed, but to these footstep followers of Jesus has been given God's own Holy Spirit, and those who yield themselves to 'its sweet influence find themselves possessed of a strange wisdom, a wisdom which knows how to climb over the walls of separation which others might build, which knows how to reach through fences which others might construct, and clasp in warm and loving greeting the hand of a brother Christian. These have been able truthfully to sing:

"We are not divided,  
All one body we."

Again, one of the phases of fellowship in which we personally find considerable satisfaction is in the exchange of views on matters of doctrine and Scripture interpretation. But in this our aim is practical rather than theoretical. We find in ourselves and in others a natural disposition to give attention to doctrine *rather than* to walk, whereas what attention we give to doctrine should ever be with a view to a closer walk with God. There is in this, as has been well observed, a great and imminent danger. One may hold the most accurate views' regarding the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, may be able to state them in the most precise formulas, may be thoroughly instructed in dispensational and prophetic truth, and may know familiarly the teaching embodied in the types and ordinances, *and yet be barren of fruit*. There is grave danger that that which was Philadelphian become Laodicean in character-rich, increased with the best doctrinal goods, handed down from fathers with whom they were living, life-controlling truths, and conscious of no need -- luke-warm. There may be little life, where there is much light.

As illustrating this danger of over-developing the doctrinal side at the expense of growth in the devotional side of our character, we shall never forget some words which came from the pulpit - of a church some years ago which we were attending. The preacher on that occasion said something like this: He, knew a family in which the father was very sound in doctrine, in which the mother was also very sound in doctrine, and all the grown-up members of the family likewise. It was difficult, he said, to find any point on which they were inexact in their understanding of the Scriptures, and yet, continued he, "had the Lord reached down and taken that whole family straight up to heaven, no one down here would have missed them."

Now, of course, we cannot agree with that preacher's theology, but we have a large fellowship with the sentiment underlying his words. There was present in that family a wonderful ability, but a strange lack of the more excellent thing. The letter of the truth was present, but its spirit was absent.

On the other hand we believe that attitude to be a most mistaken one which provides little or no time for the study of doctrine, but, regarding all, careful study of our Father's Word as so much hair-splitting, presumes to teach, either by express statement, or by suggested implication; that a deep knowledge of doctrine cannot go hand in hand with spiritual development, and that spirituality and sanctification can be better attained by leaving alone the study of doctrine, and by devoting one's time and energies in other directions. They give; us wise -counsel, in these cold, Laodicean days, who warn us of the danger of forsaking our "first love," and who emphasize the importance of the devotional side -of our development. And it is counsel to which we do well to take heed. But it is false counsel and not true, if it is coupled with the suggestion that by neglecting the study of our Father's Word we shall escape this danger, retain our first love, and worship God with greater reverence. Nothing could be more untrue. The first love we had for God and for Jesus came as the result of the sowing of, the good seed of the Word in our hearts, and it is by continually studying that Word that we learn more of our Heavenly Father and of our great Elder Brother. The more we know of some persons the less we like them, but not so with our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. The more we learn of Them, the more reason we have to love Them-the more our first love will grow. Make no mistake -- if we neglect the study of the Word we deprive ourselves of the very thing which would nourish our first love, and it will surely starve. It is true that knowledge *alone* puffeth up. The Apostle himself reminds us of this in 1 Cor. 8:1. But the Apostle does not say that while knowledge puffeth up, lack of knowledge (that is to say, ignorance) -buildeth up. Ignorance, or lack of knowledge, does' not build up, and it is no safeguard against being puffed up, either. 'Indeed, some of those who are most puffed up and proud in heart, give evidence that they lack in love as well as in knowledge, and they are certainly devoid of the true wisdom.

Just before he died, Brother Russell, in the 1916 Foreword to the Sixth Volume, took occasion 'to present his latest views on a point of doctrine -- the doctrine of justification -- and in doing so he remarked that "to many it would not seem worth while to mention" them. Surely it must have been with a keen sense of disappointment that he wrote that line. Note the point of his sad comment. It is not that there were some, who, after due consideration, might be unable to embrace his latest views. It is that there were many who had so little fellowship with him in the study of our Father's Word, that what was of considerable importance to him, what was doubtless the fruit of hours, weeks, perhaps months, of concentrated meditation on his part, was not worth mentioning to them. Whether or not we find ourselves able to agree with him in every particular on this or on other points of doctrine 'on which he wrote, we are certainly glad that, having received what he regarded as a "clearer appreciation of the Divine Plan" he "had pleasure in passing it on to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness."



Fellowship with others of like. precious faith being so very desirable, the question naturally arises, "How may we promote it? How may we ourselves obtain more of it?" To this the Scriptures make reply: The only way to secure friends is to be one. "The man that hath friends must show himself friendly." - Prov. 18:24.

Then too, the words of the Master that it is more blessed to give than to receive, are surely applicable to fellowship. So we may say that the best way to *get* more fellowship, if we feel that we desire more, is to *give* more.

Another thing: Before we are fit for fellowship we must be able to do without it. This statement may seem strange,- yet a moment's reflection will convince us of its truth. Believing, as we most certainly do, that on earth there is nothing sweeter than true Christian fellowship, we nevertheless must be able, if necessary, to do without it, and find the fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, enough for all our comfort, strength, and stay. Not only so, but if this condition be really true of us, when we come into a gathering with other Christians, we will be something of a help to them. Otherwise we, may be a hindrance to them.

In our own plans for securing more and more fellowship with others, and maintaining that fellowship on a high spiritual plane, we have noted a few points which we propose to practise ourselves. One of these we pass on now to the reader, for what it may be worth. It is this. We will try to become a better listener. As every one knows, it takes practice to be a good listener;- then, too, not merely to listen, but to listen in a way that shows we are giving attention. That means a good deal more than perhaps appears at first glance. *If one is overcharged with the cares of this life, 'he cannot be a good listener.* When others speak to him, he may appear to be listening, but actually his mind is too preoccupied to be of any real comfort to the one seeking his sympathy, or attention seeking, shall we not say, his *fellowship*.

There is a story told of a father, one-time, who was reading a newspaper, when his little child wished to tell him something, which to the child was very important. The father attempted to hold the conversation with her while continuing to read his newspaper. "Listen, Father," said the little girl, tugging at his coat sleeve. "I am listening," he said, continuing to keep his eyes glued to the newspaper. "Ah! but I want you to listen with your eyes, too," replied the little girl. She wanted his undivided attention. And so, in order *to get* more of the fellowship of our brother in Christ, we are determined to *give* more of our fellowship to him, and this will mean an emptying of our life of all the things that cause it to center around self, that we may be free to fellowship with our brethren in a way that will mean something to *them*.

Let us close this "meditation" by relating a little experience that occurred a few years ago. Three of us stood on the station platform waiting until the train in which another friend was to take a journey pulled out. As we stood there the train-conductor came along. He was one of those kindly, genial-faced men who had grown grey in the service of the public. As he walked down the platform near to where we stood, the engineer of the train, also one whose face showed his kindly character, caught up with him. Said the engineer *to* the conductor: "Are you going with me today, or am I going with you?" The smiling face of the train-conductor remains with us still, as we remember his reply: "Let's go," said he, "together."

- P. L. Read.

## **BROTHERS OF THE FAITH**

In Christ there is no East nor West,  
In Him no South nor North;  
But one great fellowship of love  
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere  
Their high communion find;  
His service is the golden cord  
Close-binding all mankind.

Join hands then, brothers of the faith,  
Whate'er your race may be;  
Who serves my Father as a son  
Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,  
In Him meet South and North;  
All Christly souls are one in Him  
Throughout the whole wide earth.

*- John Oxenham.*

## The Father of the Faithful

### Genesis 24

*"I will go!" - Gen. 24:58.*

ABRAHAM WAS now well advanced in years, and looking back upon his life he realized he had been richly blessed of the Lord. He and Isaac had been left alone to mourn their loss at the death of Sarah. Isaac was now forty years of age, and his father desired to see him suitably married before he himself should be called hence. He never doubted that God would fulfill His promise of a seed, but he wanted to be sure of fulfilling all his own obligations. He therefore bound his servant Eliezer by a double oath: that he would not take a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of Canaan, but from his own kin at Haran; and second, that he would not take Isaac unto the land whence Abraham had come. So he sent Eliezer on this solemn commission to Mesopotamia, a distance of about five hundred miles, where his brother Nahor and family lived, and assured him that God would send His angel before him and give him success.

Eliezer was a trusty servant, for we read that "all the goods of his master were in his hand." He started on his journey with ten camels, and as he drew nearer and nearer to the city of Nahor he realized his responsibility, and that some action must soon be taken. Upon reaching the city at nightfall, the devoted servant made his camels to kneel down at the well outside the city while he prayed. Perhaps this was not an audible prayer, for we read, in relating the incident later to Laban he said: "Before I had done *speaking in thine heart.*" He addressed God as the Lord God of his master, and pleaded that He would show kindness to his master by giving his servant "good speed" on his mission. The prayer is beautiful in its simplicity and trustfulness, and surely reflects the piety which reigned in Abraham's camp and which was the result of Abraham's close walk with God. The prayer shows not only the servant's reverence and trust in God, but his confidence, respect, and admiration for his master Abraham. He continues: "And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink; and I will give thy camels drink also, let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

### A SIGNIFICANT SIGN CHOSEN

In this prayer may we not find a lesson—that the minutest things are not too small to bring to Him who numbers the hairs of our heads. No undertaking can we afford to begin without first asking the overruling of the Lord—committing our way to Him and trusting that He will bring it to pass. And we wonder if in this prayer by this faithful servant, there is an indication that, under special circumstances, we may be given signs by the Lord of His will. We would have no right to ask for a sign to satisfy our curiosity, or in matters of little importance, but the Lord does indicate His will oftentimes by outward providence. If we are in doubt regarding the Lord's will, we should not venture one step until He has indicated what He would have us do.

The sign Eliezer chose was significant. He did not ask the Lord to let it come to pass that the first girl who came with a flower in her hand should be the one appointed for Isaac, or other such intrinsically insignificant sign; but it was a sign that would indicate character. He knew Isaac, and he knew the kind of wife he would choose would be one who was trustworthy, good-hearted, courteous, ready to serve. It was these qualities in Rebecca that afterwards caused Isaac to feel that she was the wife God had designed for him—one who would be a suitable companion and one who would supplement his own character. Hence it was these qualities that Eliezer was looking for in the one he was seeking for Isaac.

## **"BEFORE THEY CALL I WILL ANSWER"**

The simplicity and trust of a little child is always honored of the Lord, and in the case of Eliezer, "before he had done speaking," the answer came. It is a thrilling story that follows: Rebecca, "fair to look upon," appeared, offering to draw water for the camels, while Eliezer "wondered" and "held his peace to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." He had thrown the whole responsibility of his mission upon God, soon being convinced that his prayer was answered and that Rebecca was the one he was seeking as a suitable helpmeet for Isaac. And again, "the man bowed down his head, and worshiped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord-God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth; I being in the way, the Lord led me to the -house of my master's brethren." Like Abraham, this faithful servant would not take a step without prayer, and when his prayer was answered, he did not delay to acknowledge it and to thank God. The hearts of God's servants are "centers from which the fragrance of silent prayer is ever exhaling into the presence of God."

The story is a familiar one of how the servant gave Rebecca a golden earring and two bracelets for her hands, and asked who she was and if there was room in her father's house for him to lodge. Rebecca quickly responded and invited him to her home. She ran and told her mother and her brother Laban, who came to Eliezer and warmly welcomed him, and at once proceeded to make him and the men with him comfortable for the night. After the camels were cared for, and he and the men had washed and sat down to meat, Eliezer again showed his faithfulness to his master, refusing to eat until he had told his errand. His heart was in his mission more than in his own welfare, and though doubtless weary with the long journey, needing food and rest, he would neither eat nor lie down to rest until he had told his story and discharged his duty. Surely he had learned something of the faithfulness of his master Abraham. No wonder "all the goods of his master were in his hand." Abraham knew he could trust him. He had doubtless proved himself faithful in the little things, and could therefore be trusted with "much." The Lord grant that we too may be faithful even when it costs us something of the comforts of life.

## **THE SOUL'S ANSWER TO THE DIVINE SUMMONS**

Since "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," let us notice this story somewhat in detail, for we believe it furnishes a beautiful illustration of the great mystery of the Church. Let us have in mind that Abraham represents our heavenly Father; Isaac, our Lord Jesus; Eliezer, the Holy Spirit. As Abraham sent Eliezer to choose a bride for his son, so our Father sent His Holy Spirit to gather out that elect company that will constitute the Bride of Christ. As Abraham charged the servants not to take a wife for his son from the Canaanites round about him, but from those who were related to him, so God does not choose this elect class from the heathen, but from the household of faith believers, and to them He gives **His** Holy Spirit. Eliezer explained that Abraham was very rich, that the Lord had greatly blessed him, and that Isaac was heir of all that he had. It was by telling of Isaac that Eliezer sought to attract the heart of Rebecca. So the Holy Spirit reveals the Father and the Son. He tells us of the love of Jesus. "He shall take of Mine and show it unto you." The jewels being given to Rebecca, well represent the spiritual blessings that come to those who hearken to the Spirit of the Lord. The question was put to Rebecca, Would she be willing to leave her home and go to a far country and be the wife of Isaac? Her prompt answer was, "*I will go.*" It meant something for Rebecca to leave her father's house and her own people, and so it means something for those who accept the call in the present time. "Forget thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

## THE REVELATION OF CHRIST DETACHES FROM EARTH

The summons itself was a call to a girl, poor in this world's goods, not because of her standing in society or her worth or beauty; but because it was so willed in the heart and counsels of Abraham. So is the call of the Bride of Christ -- chosen from among the foolish, weak, and unlearned--"That no flesh should glory in His presence." If that call is accepted, Christ, our Isaac, becomes to us "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." As in the case of Rebecca, her mother and brother sought to delay - her going, so there is much that would hinder and delay our prompt response to the call; but let us like Rebecca, lay aside every weight and every entanglement, in the power of the Holy Spirit, whose office is to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us. It was Isaac-what the servant told her of him, and the joy of meeting him, the joy of being his bride, that drew Rebecca's heart; and it is the revelation of Christ, the hope of seeing and being with Him, the delight of sharing with Him in His great redemptive work, bringing blessing to all the families of the earth, that will detach our hearts from all that is of the earth. It is in this complete detachment that the Lord Himself becomes the fountain of the soul's joy. The trials which meet God's people ever tend to make manifest to what extent the 'heart has found its *all* in Christ; and it is a possible attainment to so walk in sweet communion with Him as to be independent of things and people here for our peace. and joy of heart-these being founded in Christ.

"Jesus, to whom I fly,  
Doth all my needs fulfill;  
What though created streams are dry,  
I have the fountain still.

"Stripped of each earthly friend,  
I find them all in One;  
And peace and joy which never end  
Abound in Christ alone."

The Son is the great object of all the thoughts and counsels of God; if any are called to glory or dignity, it can be only in connection with Him. He is the life of the Church.. The life, the righteousness, and the hope of the Church come as a result of her being one with Him who was raised-from the dead. As "woman is the glory of the man" (1 Cor. 11:7), so the Church is the glory of Christ -- "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This is most remarkable. "Fulness" means complement that which being added to something else makes up a whole" just as Christ the Head and the Church His Body make up the "one new man." (Eph. 2:15.) Therefore it is riot to be marveled at that the Church should have been in the eternal counsels of God. When we consider her as the Body, the Bride, the Companion of His only begotten Son, we see there was great reason for her being thought of before the foundation of the, world. She is to be the sharer of all the Son's dignity and glory, as she is the sharer of all that love of the Father of which He has been the object (John 17:22, 23), and just as Rebecca shared in all that belonged to Isaac. "It will be His joy throughout eternity to exhibit the Church in all 'the glory and beauty with which He has endowed her, for her glory and beauty will be but the reflection of His." As we are occupied with such a wonderful hope,. it cannot but touch the heart and impress one with the importance of 'holiness in thought, in word, in action. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Only such as are "children of their Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:43-48) can hope to be among this select company.

"Truth, and the practical application of truth, are two very different things." It is one thing to speak of the glories of the Church and another thing to, be influenced by them to the extent of

making a real change in the heart and life. With Rebecca the effect was most marked and decisive. It detached her heart from the scenes around her. She was ready to leave all. If the hope of being Isaac's bride and joint-heir with him of all that he possessed of righteousness, dignity, honor, was a reality, then to continue in her present home and condition would be to despise all that had been set before her. She had neither seen Isaac nor the inheritance, but she believed the testimony of the servant. She saw the hand of God; and with a more or less conscious faith, she unhesitatingly expressed her readiness to accept - "I will go."

"The journey was long and toilsome; but all the way the heart of the young girl was sustained by the tidings told her by the faithful servant, who beguiled the weary miles with stories of the home to which she was journeying, and the man with whom her life was to be united" "Whom having not seen, she loved: and in whom, though she saw him not, she rejoiced." She already loved him and ardently longed to see him.

### **"SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD"**

Isaac had gone forth to meditate at eventide. The evening seems the most favorable time for meditation the time between the alertness, and activity of the day and the quietness and silence of sleep at night. It is the time when we should be able to turn our minds from the duties and cares of life, that our souls may, without distraction, survey the wonders of God. What we all need above all else is to let the mind dwell on divine things-upon the Lord and His Word. It is thus when we "lift our eyes" that God appears on our horizon. How sorely we need this in these days, if we would meet successfully and in the spirit of the Lord the experiences by the way.

As Isaac was meditating, eagerly anticipating the coming of his bride, mingling all with holy thought, he "lifted up his eyes" across the pastures, and lo, the camels were coming. Soon the two young lives were brought together. "Happy meeting! which made Rebecca oblivious of all the trials and hardships of her journey, and the loss of her friends. Was it not also an emblem of the moment when the work of the Holy Spirit, our gracious Guide, will conclude in the presence of our Lord, the true Bridegroom of saintly hearts, and we shall see His face, to be for ever with Him, going no more out for ever?"

"O, glorious Day, for thee we long!  
We will be faithful, will, the  
Burdens bear, sustained by grace divine.  
In meek submission to Thy holy will,  
Dear Lord, by faith we clasp Thy hand  
As side by side we tread the Narrow Way  
And wait for it will surely come --  
Some day, some dear, sweet day,  
O, tarry not too long!

- *Contributed.*