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The Authorship and Credibility of the Bible

While the Bible is generally accepted by Christian people as of divine authority, comparatively few are able to clearly state just why they so esteem it. The internal evidence of its truthfulness, and its grandeur of doctrine, are the principal evidences on which its testimony is, and should be, generally received; and truly these are strong, and convincing of its divine authorship and authority; yet the man of God who would be thoroughly furnished with the truth, and armed against every attack of skepticism, should endeavor to know all he can of the time, manner, circumstances, etc., under which it was written; whether it has been preserved free from corruption; and whether in its present condition it is worthy of full confidence. Let us, therefore, briefly consider what testimony we have to the credibility of the Sacred Writings.

From numerous expressions, references and quotations in the New Testament by our Lord and the apostles it is evident that a certain body of writings was at that time considered to be of divine authority. The Sacred Scriptures then in existence are now characterized as the Old Testament Scriptures (the Scriptures of the Old or Law Covenant), while that which was added by our Lord and the apostles is termed the New Testament (the New Covenant) Scriptures.

No other book which the world has ever known has such a history as the Bible. Its origin and authorship, its antiquity, its wonderful preservation in the midst of the unparalleled and continuous opposition which sought to destroy it, as well as its diversity and teaching, make the Bible the most wonderful book in existence.

It is a collection composed of sixty-six separate books, written by about forty different writers, living centuries apart, speaking different languages, subjects of different governments, and brought up under different civilizations. Over 1500 years elapsed between the writings of Moses and of John.

As no other reliable history dates so far back as the Bible, we are obliged to look mainly to its own internal evidence, as to its origin, authorship, and the reason for its existence, and indeed for its credibility in every respect; and further, we should look for such corroboration of its

statements as reason, its own harmony with itself, and with other known facts, and subsequent developments furnish. And indeed this is the evidence of reliability on which all history must rest. To such evidence we are indebted for all our knowledge of past events and of all present events as well, except such as come under our own immediate observation. He who would cast away Bible history as unworthy of credence, must on the same ground reject all history; and to be entirely consistent, must believe nothing which does not come under his own personal observation.

If its statements, thoroughly understood, are contradictory, or are colored by prejudice, or are proven untrue by a positive scientific knowledge, or if subsequent developments prove its predictions untrue, and thereby show the ignorance or dishonesty of the authors of the Bible, then we may reasonably conclude that the entire book is unworthy of confidence, and should reject it. But if, on the contrary, we find that a thorough understanding of the Bible, according to its own rules of interpretation, shows its statements to be in harmony with each other; if it bears no evidence of prejudicial coloring; if many of its prophecies have actually come true, and others admit of future fulfillment; if the integrity of its writers is manifested by unvarnished records, then we have reason to believe the book. Its entire testimony, historic, prophetic, and doctrinal, stands or falls together. Science is yet in its infancy, yet in so far as positive scientific knowledge has been attained, it should and does corroborate the Bible testimony.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES.

Those who will make a study of the Bible plan will be fully convinced of the conclusive evidence of the credibility of the Sacred Scriptures, which is furnished in the purity, harmony and grandeur of its teachings. Outside of the Scriptures we have nowhere to look for an account of the circumstances and motives of the earliest writers: but they furnish these items of information themselves, and their integrity and evident truthfulness in other matters is a sufficient guarantee of truthfulness in these.

Our first definite information with reference to the Sacred Writings is afforded by the direction given to Moses to write the law and history in a book, and put it in the side of the ark for preservation. (See Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Deut. 31:9-26.) This book was left for the guidance of the people. Additions were made to it from time to time by subsequent writers, and in the days of the kings, scribes appear to have been appointed whose business it was to keep a careful record of the important events occurring in Jewish history, which records--Samuel, Kings, Chronicles--were preserved and subsequently incorporated with the Law. The prophets also did not confine themselves to oral teaching, but wrote and in some cases had scribes to record their teachings. (See, Joshua 1:8; 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 27:32; 29:29,30; 2 Chronicles 33:18,19; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 30:2; 36:2; 45:1; 51:60.) As a result we have the Old Testament Scriptures, composed of history, prophecy and law, written by divine direction, as these citations and also Paul's testimony (2 Timothy 3:15,16) prove. These writings collectively were termed 'The Law and The Prophets,' and the Hebrews were taught of God to esteem them of divine authority and authorship, the writers being merely the agents through whom they received them. They were so taught to esteem them, by the miraculous dealings of God with them as a people, in confirmation of his words to them through the prophets, thus endorsing them as his agents (See, Exod. 14:30,31; 19:9; 1 Kings 18:21,27,30,36,39); and further by the establishment and enforcement of the law as proclaimed and recorded by Moses.

The political interests and the religious veneration of the Israelites, under God's immediate overruling and protection, combined to preserve and protect these writings from contamination. Religiously, they were rightfully regarded with the deepest veneration, while politically they were the only guarantee which the people possessed against despotism. The Jewish copyists regarded

these documents with great veneration. A very slight error in copying often led them to destroy it and begin anew. Josephus says that through all the ages that had passed none had ventured to add to, take away from, or transpose, aught of the Sacred Writings.

In the degeneracy of the Jewish nation, under the idolatrous administration of the successors of Rehoboam, these Sacred Writings fell into disuse and were almost forgotten, though they seem never to have been taken from their place. In the reformation conducted by Josiah, they were again brought to light. Again, in the Babylonish captivity this book was lost sight of by the Israelites, though it appears that they were accustomed to meet together in little companies in Babylon to be instructed by the scribes, who either taught the Law from memory or from copies in their possession. On the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem, the Scriptures were again brought out, and Ezra and his companions read the law to the people, commenting upon and explaining it. (Nehemiah 8:1-8 .) This public reading of the Scriptures was the only means of keeping them before the people, as printing was yet unknown and the cost of a manuscript copy was beyond the reach of the people, very few of whom could read. At the time of our Lord's first advent, these OT Scriptures existed substantially as we have them to-day, as to matter and arrangement.

One of the strongest evidences of the authenticity of the OT Scriptures is found in the fact that the law and the prophets were continually referred to by our Lord and the apostles as authority, and that while the Lord denounced the corruptions of the Jewish Church, and their traditions, by which they made void the Word of God, he did not even intimate any corruption in these Sacred Writings, but commends them, and refers to and quotes them in proof of his claims.

In fact, the various parts of the entire book are bound together by the mutual endorsement of the various writers, so that to reject one is to mar the completeness of the whole. Each book bears its own witness and stands on its own evidence of credibility, and yet each book is linked with all the rest, both by their common spirit and harmony and by their mutual endorsement. Mark, for instance, the endorsement of the account of creation in the commandment of the law concerning the Sabbath day.-- Exod. 20:11 . Also compare Deut. 23:4,5; Joshua 24:9; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11-13; Isaiah 28:21; Hab. 3:11; Matthew 12:40 .

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The earliest copy of the New Testament known is written in the Syriac language. Its date is estimated to be about the year AD 100. And even at that early date it contained the same books as at present with the exception of the Second Epistle of Peter, the Third Epistle of John, Jude and the Book of Revelation. And these omitted books we know were written about the close of the first century, and probably had not been widely circulated among the Christian congregations at that time. All the books of the Old and New Testaments as we now have them appear, however, in the Greek, in the Sinaitic Manuscript, the oldest known Greek MS., whose date is about AD 350.

The first five books of the NT are historical, and present a clear and connected account of the life, character, circumstances, teachings and doings of Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be the Messiah promised in the OT Scriptures, and who fully substantiated his claim. The four accounts of the Evangelists, though they differ in phraseology, are in harmony in their statements, some important items being recorded by each which seem to have been overlooked by the others. These Evangelists testified to that of which they had positive knowledge. The Apostle John says: That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you--'that which was from the beginning (the beginning of the Lord's ministry), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was

manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness.' (1 John 1:1-3 .) They testify also that they saw Christ after his resurrection. The fifth book presents a valuable account of the doings of the Apostles after their anointing with the Holy Spirit, of the establishment of the Christian Church, and of the first preaching of the good news to the Gentiles.

The Apostolic Epistles were written to the various local congregations or churches, and were directed to be publicly read, and to be exchanged among the churches; and the same authority was claimed for them by their writers as that which was accorded to the OT Scriptures. (1 Thes. 5:27; Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 3:2,15,16; Hebrews 1:1,2 and 2:1-4.) These letters and the five historical books were carefully preserved by the different congregations, and were appealed to as authority in matters of doctrine.

The letters of the apostles, claiming, as they did, divine authority equal to that of the OT Scriptures, were treasured and guarded with special care by the various congregations of the early church. The New Testament was completed by the Book of The Revelation, about the close of the first century AD, after which, these epistles, etc., began to be collected for more permanent preservation.

The original copies of both the Old and New Testaments have, of course, long since disappeared, and the oldest manuscript (the Sinaitic) is reckoned to have been written about three centuries after the death of Christ. Those of earlier date were either destroyed in the persecutions under which the church suffered, or were worn out by use. These oldest manuscripts are preserved with great care in the Museums and Libraries of Europe. During the Middle Ages, when ignorance and corruption prevailed and the Bible was hidden in monasteries away from the people, God was still carrying on his work, preserving the Scriptures from destruction even in the midst of Satan's stronghold, the apostate Church of Rome. A favorite occupation of the monks during the Middle Ages was the copying of the manuscripts of the NT, which were esteemed as relics more than as God's living authoritative Word; --just as you will find in the parlor of very many worldly people handsome Bibles, which are seldom opened. Of these manuscripts there are said to be now more than two thousand, of various dates from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries. The quiet seclusion of those monks gave them special opportunities for careful copying, and years were sometimes spent in the copying of a single manuscript.

RELIABILITY OF PRESENT TRANSLATIONS.

The idea exists in some minds that during the lapse of centuries the Scriptures have become largely corrupted, and therefore a very uncertain foundation for faith. They reason that this is surely to be expected of a book which has survived so many centuries, and which has been claimed as divine authority by so many different factions, and which can be read by the majority only from translations, made by somewhat biased translators. And the late revisions of the book are supposed to be an acknowledgment of the supposed fact.

Those, however, who are acquainted with the manner in which the ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures have been preserved for centuries, carefully copied, diligently compared and translated by pious and learned linguists, whose work was thereafter subjected to the most learned and scrutinizing criticism of an age in which scholars are by no means few, are prepared to see that such an idea is by no means a correct or reasonable one, though to the uninformed it may appear so.

It is a fact that the Scriptures, as we find them to-day, bear internal evidence of their original purity; and ample means, both internal and external, are now furnished so that the careful student

may detect any error which might have crept in either by fraud or accident. While there are some errors in translation and a few interpolations in our common English translation, on the whole it is acknowledged by scholars to be a remarkably good transcript of the Sacred Word.

Before the invention of printing, the copying of the Scriptures, being very slow and tedious, involved considerable liability to error in transcribing, such as the accidental omission of a word or paragraph, the substitution of one word for another, or the misunderstanding of a word where the copyist wrote from the dictation of another person. And again, sometimes a marginal note might be mistaken for a part of the text and copied in as such. But while a very few errors have crept in, in such ways, and a few others seem to have been designedly inserted, various circumstances have been at work, both to preserve the integrity of the Sacred Writings, and also to make manifest any errors which have crept into them.

Very early in the Christian Era translations of the New Testament Scriptures were made into several languages, and the different factions that early developed and continued to exist, though they might have been desirous of adding to or taking from the original text in order to give their claims a show of Scriptural support, were watched by each other to see that they did not do so, and had they succeeded in corrupting the text in one language, another translation would make it manifest.

Even the Douay translation, in use in the Romish church, is in most respects substantially the same as the King James translation. The fact that during the 'dark ages' the Scriptures were practically cast aside, being supplanted by the decrees of popes and councils, so that its teachings had no influence upon the masses of the people who did not have copies in their possession--nor could they have read them if they had them--doubtless made unnecessary the serious alteration of the text, at a time when bold, bad men had abundant power to do so. For men who would plot treason, incite to wars and commit murders for the advancement of the papal hierarchy, as we know was done, would have been bold enough for anything. Thus the depth of ignorance in the dark ages served to protect and keep pure God's Word, so that its clear light has shone specially at the two ends of the Gospel age. (1 Corinthians 10:11 .) The few interpolations which were dared, in support of the false claims of Papacy, were made just as the gloom of the 'dark ages' was closing in upon mankind, and are now made glaringly manifest, from their lack of harmony with the context, their antagonism with other scriptures and from their absence in the oldest and most complete and reliable manuscripts.

As to the relative values of ancient manuscripts, we quote the following comments from the pen of that eminent German scholar, Constantine Tischendorf, who spent many years of his life in diligently searching out and comparing the various ancient manuscripts and translations of the Scriptures in many languages, and who has furnished to the church the results of his investigation in a careful exhibit of the various departures of the English Authorized Version of the New Testament from the three oldest and most important manuscripts.

Mr. Tischendorf says: 'As early as the reign of Elizabeth the English nation possessed an authorized translation, executed by the Bishops under the guidance of Archbishop Parker; and this, half a century later, in the year 1611, was revised at the command of James the First by a body of learned divines, and became the present 'Authorized Version.' Founded as it was on the Greek text at that time accepted by Protestant theologians, and translated with scholarship and conscientious care, this version of the New Testament has deservedly become an object of great reverence, and a truly national treasure to the English Church. The German Church alone possesses in Luther's New Testament a treasure of similar value....

'The Authorized Version, like Luther's, was made from a Greek text which Erasmus in 1516, and Robert Stephens in 1550, had formed from manuscripts of later date than the tenth century. Whether those manuscripts were thoroughly trustworthy--in other words, whether they exhibited the Apostolic original as perfectly as possible--has long been matter of diligent and learned investigation. Since the sixteenth century Greek manuscripts have been discovered of far greater antiquity than those of Erasmus and Stephens; as well as others in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Gothic, into which languages the sacred text was translated between the second and fourth centuries; while in the works of the Fathers, from the second century downwards, many quotations from the New Testament have been found and compared....One thing is agreed upon by the majority of those who understand the subject, namely, that the oldest copies approach the original text more nearly than the later ones.

'Providence has ordained for the New Testament more sources of the greatest antiquity than are possessed by all the old Greek literature put together. And of these, two manuscripts have for long been especially esteemed by Christian scholars, since, in addition to their great antiquity, they contain very nearly the whole of both the Old and New Testaments. Of these two, one is deposited in the Vatican, and the other in the British Museum. Within the last ten years a third has been added to the number, which was found at Mount Sinai, and is now at St. Petersburg. These three manuscripts undoubtedly stand at the head of all the ancient copies of the New Testament, and it is by their standard that both the early editions of the Greek text and the modern versions are to be compared and corrected.

'The effect of comparing the common English text with the most ancient authorities will be as often to disclose agreement as disagreement. True, the three great manuscripts alluded to differ from each other both in age and authority, and no one of them can be said to stand so high that its sole verdict is sufficient to silence all contradiction. But to treat such ancient authorities with neglect would be either unwarrantable arrogance or culpable negligence; and it would be indeed a misunderstanding of the dealings of Providence, if after these documents had been preserved through all the dangers of fourteen or fifteen centuries, and delivered safe into our hands, we were not to receive them with thankfulness as the most valuable instruments for the elucidation of truth.

'It may be urged that our undertaking is opposed to true reverence; and that by thus exposing the inaccuracies of the English Version, we shall bring discredit upon a work which has been for centuries the object of love and veneration both in public and private. But those who would stigmatize the process of scientific criticism and test, which we propose, as irreverent, are greatly mistaken. To us the most reverential course appears to be, to accept nothing as the Word of God which is not proved to be so by the evidence of the oldest, and therefore most certain, witnesses that he has put into our hands. With this in view, and with this intention, the writer has occupied himself for thirty years past, in searching not only the Libraries of Europe, but the obscurest convents of the East, both in Africa and Asia, for the most ancient manuscript, of the Bible; and has done all in his power to collect the most important of such documents, to arrange them and to publish them for the benefit both of the present age and of posterity, so as to settle the original text of the sacred writers on the basis of the most careful investigation.

'The first of these great manuscripts already referred to which came into possession of Europe was the Vatican Codex. Whence it was acquired by the Vatican Library is not known; but it appears in the first catalogue of that collection which dates from the year 1475. The manuscript embraces both the Old and New Testaments. Of the later it contains the four Gospels, the Acts, the seven Catholic Epistles, nine of the Pauline Epistles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews as far as Heb. 9:14, from which verse to the end of the New Testament it is deficient; so that not only the

last chapters of Hebrews, but the Epistle to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, as well as the Revelation, are missing. The peculiarities of the writing, the arrangement of the manuscript, and the character of the text--especially certain very remarkable readings--all combine to place the execution of the Codex in the fourth century, possibly about the middle of it.

'The Alexandrine Codex was presented to King Charles the First in 1628 by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople, who had himself brought it from Alexandria, of which place he was formerly Patriarch, and whence it derives its name. It contains both the Old and New Testaments. Of the New the following passages are wanting:-- Matthew 1:1 to 25:6; John 6:50 to 8:52; 2 Corinthians 4:13 to 12:6It would appear to have been written about the middle of the fifth century.

'The Sinaitic Codex I was myself so happy as to discover in 1844 and 1859, at the convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai, in the later of which years I brought it to Russia to the Emperor Alexander the Second, at whose instance my second journey to the East was undertaken. It contains both Old and New Testaments--the latter perfect without the loss of a single leaf....All the considerations which tend to fix the date of manuscripts lead to the conclusion that the Sinaitic Codex belongs to the middle of the fourth century. Indeed, the evidence is clearer in this case than in that of the Vatican Codex; and it is not improbable (which cannot be the case with the Vatican MS.) that it is one of the fifty copies which the Emperor Constantine in the year 331 directed to be made for Byzantium, under the care of Eusebius of Caesarea. In this case it is a natural inference that it was sent from Byzantium to the monks of St. Catherine by the Emperor Justinian, the founder of the convent. The entire Codex was published by its discoverer, under the orders of the Emperor of Russia, in 1862, with the most scrupulous exactness, and in a truly magnificent shape, and the New Testament portion was issued in a portable form in 1863 and 1865.

'These considerations seem to show that the first place among the three great manuscripts, both for age and extent, is held by the Sinaitic Codex, the second by the Vatican, and the third by the Alexandrine. And this order is completely confirmed by the text they exhibit, which is not merely that which was accepted in the East at the time they were copied; but, having been written by Alexandrine copyists who knew but little of Greek, and therefore had no temptation to make alterations, they remain in a high degree faithful to the text which was accepted through a large portion of Christendom in the third and second centuries. The proof of this is their agreement with the most ancient translations--namely, the so-called Italic, made in the second century in proconsular Africa; the Syriac Gospels of the same date, now transferred from the convents of the Nitrian desert to the British Museum; and the Coptic version of the third century. It is confirmed also by their agreement with the oldest of the Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement and Origen.

'These remarks apply to the Sinaitic Codex--which is remarkably close in its agreement to the 'Italic' version--more than they do to the Vatican MS., and still more so than the Alexandrine, which, however, is of far more value in the Acts, Epistles and Apocalypse than it is in the Gospels....

'No single work of ancient Greek classical literature can command three such original witnesses as the Sinaitic, Vatican and Alexandrine Manuscripts, to the integrity and accuracy of its text. That they are available in the case of a book which is at once the most sacred and the most important in the world is surely matter for the deepest thankfulness to God.'

(To be continued)

"He is Precious"

PART III

"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious." - 1 Peter 2:7.

IN THE previous portions of our study on this text and theme, attention has been devoted mainly to the variant rendering of the Greek words, which read, "Unto you therefore which believe is the honor." As we have seen, these lovely, encouraging words tell us that the true-hearted believer may enjoy the hope and expectation of being joined and bonded into an eternal union with his Lord and Savior as living stones cemented to the one altogether essential foundation-stone to be laid by God in the new Zion of the Kingdom yet to come. It was our happy 'privilege to note the present honor of that primary selection from the stone-pits of this present world which every child of God enjoys -- that election which separates him from the general body of non-believing men in this present life arising out of the Master-mason's initial scrutiny -- and which puts him in the right position to attain greater honors yet to come when the chiseling and tooling processes are complete, and he has been made ready to be laid as a living stone, to the many other living stones superimposed upon the one elect and precious Foundation-stone of God's future eternal Habitation. That is a theme most wonderful, to which our brief attention did but the scantiest of scant justice, and which left much ground for the reader's own deliberations to explore. It is a theme for his noblest; and best powers.

JESUS-PRE-EMINENT AND INCOMPARABLE

We turn now to contemplate the other thought, and to call attention to the unique preciousness of the Lord in the light of what he stands for to us, and to the great Plan of God. At the outset of our study we suggested that if the earthy stone could speak, its very presence in the structure would acknowledge and confess an altogether superior excellence in he one and only true foundation-stone, in that it alone was the one uniquely essential stone of the edifice, and without which its angles and points of alignment could not be successfully laid out. That this is true -- true beyond all doubt -- in the spirit al structure of the new Mount Zion will, and must, be acknowledged by all who come to understand he will and the way of the Most High God.

Among much that eventually will be precious to God and honorable before men, Jesus will stand out pre-eminent and incomparable. No other "stone" would be so indispensable as that one. Of those engaged, whether as writer or reader in this present study, it could not be said that a "needs-must" existed for them to be built into the edifice, but that could not be said of Christ. He must be there, as an out-and-out necessity. His presence in the structure is absolutely essential and indispensable. Without him the remainder could be nothing, could form nothing, could accomplish nothing. "With him" and "in him" they can be built up a spiritual house or the Lord God of Israel to dwell in through age-lasting years.

From the standpoint of the stones alone, he ha' a place and preciousness, a value and uniqueness surpassing all the rest, a superiority and excellence which it is our joy and delight to own and declare. Thank God for that Corner-stone, elect and precious, on which so much has depended and will forever depend -- a Stone precious beyond price to the Builder, and precious beyond comparison to those built upon him. And that means precious beyond comparison to me and to you, my brother in the Lord.

COMPARISON OF EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY VALUES

The dictionary defines the word precious to mean "of great price or worth; costly, highly esteemed, valuable because rare." On the material plane one thinks immediately of various minerals of the earth -- gold, platinum, silver, and other rare ores and metals; of diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and other rare gems of the mine. These are things of extrinsic worth, precious because of higher value than most other things, precious because of "their scarcity. Then there are also the precious things of art, the great pictures of the masters; the great compositions of the musicians; the great statues of the great sculptors - all precious because few exist. These are also of extrinsic worth; precious because they excel in beauty and design.

But there are other things in which the preciousness is intrinsic, being accounted precious because worthy of great esteem. The love of a near companion, the trust of a friend, the sympathy of a co-sufferer, the inspiration of a helping hand, these and other like qualities are of inestimable worth and precious beyond rubies. The love of a Jonathan and a David, who can assess its worth? These are the most precious things of the human life, and happy indeed is that heart in which they abound!

But while these things are the best products of the human heart, they pale as the stars before the rising sun when placed alongside the precious things of the worthy Lamb. Let us note how Peter assesses the preciousness of his Lord by the nature of his brethren's needs. "You know," says he; "that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from you fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (1 Pet. 1:18, 19, R.S.) "Not with perishable things," not with silver and gold! Oh, let us mark this comparison, for even silver and gold perish with age and usage. So do precious stones and marble. But that precious thing by which redemption was wrought for them (and us) has stood the tests and changes of successive centuries and still stands an undiminished thing of value.

Let us take Peter's illustration and think back to that tragic night in Hebrew history when a lamb, without spot or blemish, was thrust into the breach, when the angel of death swept through the land, and let us, for a moment, suppose that a wedge of gold or a cluster of gems had been fixed to the lintel and doorpost of the house, and then ask what would have ensued? Without doubt the sword of destruction would have entered that dwelling place and the firstborn of the family (albeit an Israelite), would have been the tragic forfeit of that fateful visitation. Neither silver nor gold, nor other precious thing had any value compared with the shed blood, but the blood of a lamb was enough to protect and redeem in that eventful hour.

"NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS"

How forceful and beautiful is Peter's adaptation of that night's redemption to his kinsmen in the flesh: "You were ransomed [redeemed] not with silver and gold or other like things, but by the precious blood of Christ." Not all the wealth of the Indies could have done for them what that sacrifice of Christ had done. In all the wide world there was nothing else that could accomplish what that precious blood had done,- "No *one* in heaven or on earth was able" (Rev. 5:3-5) to do what the Lamb that was slain accomplished. Rare, peerless, unique was the value and worth of that sacrifice, for it succeeded when all else had failed!

Precious beyond comparison, therefore, was the worthy Lamb to these needy souls, and precious is he to us also today, for our need is not one whit less than theirs. If so much was needed to effect reinstatement of the natural branches of the good olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24) into their

parent stock, is anything less required to engraft us of the "wild olive tree" into the good olive stock? Nay verily! We too were redeemed from the stocks and stones of our Gentile progenitors by that same precious blood, and enabled, like them, to have confidence in God (to become believers in God, R.V.) who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that with them, our faith and hope might be in God. - 1 Pet. 1:21.

"CALL TO REMEMBRANCE THE FORMER DAYS"

Let us forget not, in this our busy day, how we, the unjust, were brought near to God (1 Pet. 3:18), for in the tumult and turmoil of life it is not beyond the range of possibility to have these primary things of our Christian life crowded out or thrust back on the stage of our common experience. We can so easily forget (or fail to recall) these early steps of our Christian life. Precious indeed in those early days was the worthy Lamb to our rejoicing souls, and woe betide us indeed if he is less precious today. Shame be to any one of us if the Shepherd-care of the intervening years has not multiplied his preciousness and dearness ten thousand-fold!

Repeating the same truth in other searching words, Peter reminds his brethren that Jesus had borne their sins in his body on the tree, that they might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by his wounds they had been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24.) Continuing, he further reminded them that they had been as sheep going astray, but had now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian (or Overseer) of their souls.

ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD

Here we catch many echoes from Isaiah's Messianic refrain. Surely those dear dispersion brethren would know whence Peter culled his thoughts, and would recognize Jesus as the subject of the prophetic outline -- wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, his chastisement had made them whole, and with his stripes they had been healed. All they like sheep had gone astray and had turned every one to his own way, and the Lord had laid upon him the iniquity of them all. Now in God's due time, and by God's grace, they had "returned" to the Shepherd and Caretaker of their souls. Peter's application gives the keynote to the right understanding of Isaiah's pathetic words. They have reference, primarily and precisely to the wandering sheep of the Hebrew fold, and put into speech the innermost feelings of the remnant that would "return" to the warmth and comfort of the divine care. Of course, Gentiles too, may, in a way, appropriate these passages and introduce themselves into their meaning and intent, but strictly speaking (and Scripturally speaking too), the Prophet spake them only of Israel, and in particular of this believing remnant of Israel, which truly could say, "He was wounded for *our* transgressions," etc.

It is quite true that we, or our ancestors as Gentiles, "turned" to God from idols (or a demon-ridden way of life) to serve a living and true God, and that means we turned to Jesus also for deliverance from our sins, but it is not correct to say that, as the other ethnic unit of the world's population, the Gentile convert "returned" to God (or Jesus) and to the shelter of the divine fold. Formerly he had been without God and without hope in the world. But the Israelite had been the exclusive people of God -- the, exclusive sheep of his pasture, and hence could both, "stray" and "return" to the fold.

To these dear souls, therefore, the words of Peter would surely make the prophetic statements of Isaiah precious indeed, and lead them to hold the suffering Servant of whom he spake precious and estimable beyond all comparison. And so along with their brethren of the house of Judah -- the Jew -- these dispersion Israelites formed the nucleus of the divine flock, to which, in due course, the sincere believer from the Gentile world was brought, and thereafter there came to be

one fold -- a new fold -- and one comprehensive flock with one Shepherd and Caretaker, whose pastoral charge extended to all the flock.

GRATEFUL FOR THE TENDER SHEPHERD'S CARE

If Jesus, therefore, was precious to us as believers in the redemption phase of our turning to the Living God, surely in his capacity as Shepherd of the flock, he is infinitely more precious to all who now lie beneath his tender care. Men who have traveled in Oriental lands speak, at times, with wonderment of the obvious affection of the sheep for their watchful caretaker and shepherd as he stretched himself protectingly across the entrance to the fold for the night. Nosing its way through the flock, some particularly affectionate sheep has been seen to walk right close to the shepherd's knee and lay its head across it while it looked up into his face, as if in this dumb and docile way, it would thank him for his care, and assure him of its own affection and love. Usually all of them would come at his call and stand or kneel before him at his bidding, expectant and unafraid, a sure token of the trust and confidence his kindly care had gendered in their hearts. Could a dumb and trustful creature of the sub-human species give expression to its sense of preciousness and esteem in a better way than this?

Many times we have seen this affection in the faithful dog, but the domestication of the dog gives it some advantage here over the creature of the field and makes the act of comparison hardly fair. Contrariwise, the very timidity and proneness to fear of the harmless sheep reverses somewhat the tilt of the scales and sets its act of friendship for its caretaker, and its trust in his care in a more appealing light. To have won such trust and confidence of one or many members of his flock to this degree speaks volumes for the pastoral ability of the shepherd, but at the same time it indicates a sense of almost moral appreciation in the sheep, and, translated into the language of the field and the fold, it would say, in its own way, "My shepherd and caretaker is dear and precious to me." It would be tantamount and equal to a sheep's version of our twenty-third Psalm.

Peter's exhortation and appeal, savors greatly of the Oriental fold and of the reciprocal situation that would ensue when wandering sheep were once more safely housed in the fold. He had long retained sweet remembrances of some of his dear Master's pastoral utterances, and in this hour of his brethren's need worked them into his own appeal.

A man had had one hundred sheep, but one had been missing from the fold. Leaving the ninety-nine in the safe fastness of the fold, the Shepherd had gone forth into the mountain and plain to seek for an save that which was lost. Wandering sheep! yes! sheep that once went astray, but had now returned or had been brought back to the Shepherd's care, all bruised and torn and weary! The Shepherd had rejoiced over lost sheep now returned; ah yes! of course Jesus had rejoiced over the home-coming of these "other sheep." But had not the sheep also rejoiced at being home again, and shown their satisfaction for the kindly Shepherd's search?

SERVING A THREEFOLD PURPOSE

Peter also carried precious recollections of a "Good Shepherd's" claims. "I am the good shepherd," Jesus had said; "I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:14, 15.) Passing thus the memories of his Master's precious words through the prism of his own pastoral mind, Peter begins his appeal with the thought of a Lamb and the redemption it wrought. Next -- and retaining still a pastoral setting for his thought -- he reminds his beloved brethren that they were as sheep, once astray, now returned to the fold, and, as if unwilling to leave the pastoral field of thought, he exhorts the elders among them, in conclusion, to "tend the flock of God that is in your charge, . . .

as . . . examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory." (1 Pet. 5:2-4.) Thus he reminds them that Jesus is their Chief Shepherd as well as the Bishop of their souls.

He who in his earthly day claimed the honor of being the "Good Shepherd" of the flock now stood before them as its "Chief Shepherd too. Another pen adds another title to the Shepherd's dignities when it describes him as the "Great Shepherd of the sheep." (Heb. 13:20.) How beautiful and inspiring is this threefold designation of the dear Lord to every member of his flock -- a "good" Shepherd, a "great" Shepherd, and a "chief" Shepherd too! How we need to thank God for his choice of such a wonderful and faithful keeper of trusting souls!

And now to bring the matter nearer home. We also may claim and receive that same Shepherd care, for we too have been accepted as "other sheep" into the "one flock," and we also have just the same standing and need for the green pastures of truth. Faith-lacking members of that old Jewish fold have been cut off from grace that we might come in. Branches of the good olive tree (to vary the figure a while) were cut off, and grafts from a wild olive tree were rafted in, and now share with the natural branches the sap and vitality of the good olive tree. (Rom. 11:17-24.) Some who once were "far-off" have been joined with some who were "near," and now through one spirit they have joint access to, the one Father in heaven (Eph. 2:17, 18) and to the same Savior who is made "Lord of all." - Rom. 10:12.

Thu we come to the shelter of the fold, and share with t e remnant of the natural seed the Good Shepherd's care. For us, as for them, the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd become the instruments of providence, the tokens of heavenly guardianship.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SHEPHERD

It is, the shepherd's job to foresee the needs of the flock and to take all reasonable steps to satisfy those needs. It is for him to search out the place to eat, the place to drink, and the place to rest. He also had to choose exactly when to leave the fold and when to return, when to remain in the open field and when to retire into shade. Only thus was the safety of the sheep insured. Taking these choices upon itself, the sheep might eat and drink at the wrong place, and lie down to rest where danger lurked. It might venture out too early at dawn or tarry out too long at eventide; it might wander far in the noontide heat, and meet distress for lack of shade. And a ways its foes would be on the alert to profit from its waywardness, its heedlessness, or its carelessness.

The Good Shepherd of the heavenly flock is well able to do all these things. He knows what is best for his charges to eat and drink, and at what time of day to give them rest. He knows exactly when to lead them forth and when to return them to the shelter of the fold. He knows what steps to take when he sun is hot, or when the winds are cold, and the sky dark with cloud. He learned all these things by experience when tempted in all points even as they are now tempted. He learned by experience to say at all times, "Thy will be done." And that is exactly the response he expects from his sheep. He requires them to abide by his choice, to trust to his care, to accept what he gives, to live at his side, for he knows he can save (keep) to the uttermost all who put their whole life in his hands.

He knows all this by reason of his omniscience, and he wants the flock to know it too by experience, as day by day, he arranges their path, sends their supplies, and makes all things work together for their good. His providence ministers to their experience, while experience develops their appreciation for him. And thus each member of the heavenly flock can say, "My Shepherd is precious, so precious to me." Beneath his care I shall not want, for he will make me to lie down in

green pastures, he will lead me beside still waters, he will restore me if wandering; he will lead me in the path of righteousness for his name's sake. Even in the valley of the shadows he will attend me, and as for is rod and staff, they shall comfort me!

ONLY ONE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER

And this, all this, must come out of the daily experience beneath his providential Shepherd care! Is my soul parched and thirsty for heavenly-drink, or weak and languid from lack of spiritual food? He is the one to make provision for my need! Perhaps I have sought these supplies too oft or too long from my brethren in the truth, and they, leaking cisterns or empty granaries, have had nothing to give. They may have expected *my* hunger to be appeased by their controversies, or my thirst to be assuaged by their bickerings. Experience must teach me that no satisfaction arises thence; that no hunger and thirst can be met from such things. Experience must teach me to turn to my Lord, and away from my handicaps.

Or I may, *have* been drifting or wandering away from my covenant vows and a sense of deep loneliness has come over *my* soul. My need is for some one to restore me when wandering -- but who of my friends is competent for that? Mayhap they also are wanderers and drifters too -- how then can they lead me *in* the right way back to the fold? Or the shadows of a great sorrow may be darkening my skies, and I need one who can carry both my sorrow and me! Is there an earthly friend who can enter my soul and give *me* the strength to endure and to bear? Experience must teach me that no arm of flesh, subject like myself to *life's* frailties and sorrows can meet my deep need and that he only can help me and keep me in the paths of righteousness even till death.

Experience must teach me to lift my heart up to him; to expect him to hear my prayer, and supply my need. I, as his sheep, must go to him as my shepherd, immediate and direct, and to learn that no fellow-member of the flock can take his place or do for me what he has been charged of God to do. That means that my life and his are ringed around by a little circle of providential care, and that it is not a case that there is none, to me, *like* him, but that there is none *but* him. When I have learned that I can truly say, "My Savior and Shepherd is precious to me."

When, then, in these troublous days the ranks of the Fellowship seem broken and scattered, and the love that should bind us grows cool, and the voices that speak are divided and contentious, and we feel that the things of the Lord are not what they might be, what can we do? What ought we to do? One thing and one thing alone! Put the Great Shepherd back in the place which to him rightly belongs. Let him be the one Good Shepherd *to me*. Then if every, sheep in the flock -- every brother and sister in the fellowship -- does this same thing, things must come; right. His providence is competent *for* that. Permitting the Lord to have his rightful place in the heard and life is the sure corrective for all the ills and ailments both of the individual and the congregation. To know and accept him as the Shepherd and Bishop of souls individually and collectively is the unailing token of peace both for the ecclesia and its members. And *who* knowing this truth and experiencing it in his own soul, can fail to say that he who can accomplish this for a church as well as for its members, is indeed precious beyond price.

THE CONSUMMATION

This meditation must come to a close. It has traced in a small *way* that honor given to each child of God in being accepted as a living stone which, after due preparation, will be laid to the one elect Foundation-stone which God has laid in the new spiritual Zion of the New Jerusalem, and from which his authority and Law will go forth into all the earth. Even their present standing before the Lord, though; provisional, is of favor and grace, and is honorable indeed, but this is a

small thing compared to the honor which awaits them when the trimming and preparation is done and they are gathered home to be forever with the Lord. God grant us to see and appreciate the honor of our present standing before him so that his work in our hearts be not hindered or frustrated.

Lastly, our meditations have centered upon the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, by whom we are being "kept" and guarded through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. As such, he is precious to each and every sheep of his fold, as Redeemer and Provider, and worthy of all appreciation and love from all who call on his dear name. Surely each child can sing:

"Precious Jesus, how I love thee!
And I know thy love is mine;
All my little life I give thee,
Use it, Lord, in ways of thine.
Use my warmest, best affections,
Use my memory, mind and will;
Then with all thy loving spirit
All my emptied nature fill.

"All of earth and all of heaven,
All I want I find in thee;
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus,
Thou art all the world to me.

-T. Holmes, Eng.

The True Mark of Christian Maturity

Part I

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." - Rom. 13:14.

THE ending of the narrow way leading to life immortal is pictured to us in the Scriptures by a variety of helpful illustrations. It is represented as the ending of a successful race, and also as the end of a victorious warfare. Again, it is beautifully pictured as a long period of betrothal, culminating in the marriage of the espoused Church to her heavenly Bridegroom. Each illustration has its own special truth and lesson to unfold. But the ending is frequently brought to our attention in a manner calculated to remind us of some things of the present hour, the recognition of which will have everything to do with finishing our course with success and joy. The conditions on which we may hope to have a happy and abundant entrance into the presence of God, we are told again and again in the Word, need our very special attention now. The Apostle Paul would have us remember that possessing the mind of Christ, the likeness of Christ, and having "Christ formed in us," is the only condition on which we shall reach a place in the glorified Church. He informs us that "no man is crowned except he strive lawfully," clearly implying that there are inflexible rules governing the race we run, any oversight of which will mean our forfeiting the "Well done" from the lips of the Master. A zealously run race will avail nothing if these rules be ignored, just as a well-built structure of wood, hay, and stubble will result in disapproval and destruction, though its builder rear it on the right foundation. (2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:12.) In the matters of both race and building, the spirit of careful study of the mind of the Lord and obedience thereto is made a thing of supreme importance.

As Paul is the Apostle who has given us the most complete picture of what constitutes Christian maturity, we may with profit review some of his admonitions concerning it, as well as note his fervent desire to attain it in fullest measure for himself. We are impressed with his own determination to always keep pressing onward and upward until he has laid hold of all that for which Christ has laid hold on him. He keeps that final end in view; and to "be found in Him," then, is to Paul the thing most fervently to be sought. Remembering all that Paul had attained of knowledge and of relationship to the Lord, and still finding him "pressing on" toward greater attainments in both, are we not rebuked thereby if so be we have in any degree settled down in contentment with our present state of knowledge and grace? This being Paul's conception of going on to perfection, it is easy to understand the depth of his desire on behalf of his Galatian brethren, to whom he writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19.) These brethren had begun with a true vision of the new life in Christ, but had backslidden from that proper view, and once again Paul experiences as it were birth pangs on their behalf. It is evident that to the Apostle the matter of having a **correct conception** of the **work of Christ** on our behalf was of tremendous importance. Then we will remember and carefully note the height of attainment he visualized for all the saints to whom he ministered. His prayers reveal his understanding of the ultimate purpose underneath God's present dealings with us. For the Ephesian brethren the Apostle sees the possibility of their being "filled with all the fulness of God," and asks for it on their behalf. For those of the Philippian assembly he sees it possible for them to be "filled with the fruits **of righteousness**, which are by Jesus Christ." He believes it wholly consistent with practical expectations to yearn that the Colossian brethren may be "strengthened with all might, according **to His glorious power**," for so he prays for them. For his beloved brethren in Thessalonica he asks in similar strain, "The Lord make you to **increase and** abound in love one toward another, . . . to the end He may **stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness** before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." - Eph. 3:19; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:11; 1 Thess. 3:12, 13.

What is Christian Maturity?

Neglecting the clear teaching of the Scriptures on what really is the maturity Paul urges upon all true believers, many false standards and many misconceptions have been promulgated, such as conformity to man-made tests of endless variety, creeds composed of a mixture of works and organizational ratings, and again, it is often exhibited in a form of boastings, such as being without sin. But the fact that false conceptions exist will never prevent the true-hearted from seeking all that Paul advocates in his admonitions and his prayers. Satan's counterfeits are always the best of evidence that the real and genuine are things of great importance. Whatever he distorts we may be sure is something worth knowing the truth about. His false- and lower standards are well calculated to attract the greater numbers, but will never satisfy the soul hungering for "all the fulness of God."

These lower conceptions in Paul's day were a source of deep sorrow to his heart. So great was his concern over such hindrances to the growth he advocated that he was once led to express himself "I would that they were cut off who trouble you." When, after presenting the free and full Gospel of saving grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, he saw the message gladly accepted in the spirit, how it grieved his soul to see Judaizing teachers drawing them backward into an attempt at salvation by works. After he had faithfully presented the possibilities of growth into maturity in knowledge and grace through Christ, how keen was his sorrow in seeing brethren attempting to perfect themselves in the flesh. How very great his disappointment when he saw brethren who, for the time they had been believers in Christ, ought to have progressed into maturity and become competent teachers of other seekers after like maturity, but instead were as yet in their spiritual perceptions and in their heart developments babes in Christ. Only those who see with Paul the failure of the Christian life if maturity be not attained, can possibly understand how his heart was saddened by this exhibition of dwarfed spiritual vision and growth.

Thus it is that everywhere in the epistles of Paul we find that he believed most assuredly in a constant growth in both grace and knowledge. The desire to attain these for himself characterized his whole attitude from the day he began following the Lord Jesus until he reached the end of his active life. Teaching, as he never ceased to do, that such as receive Christ in justifying faith, and let Christ live in them by His Word dwelling in them richly, he would have them believe that they too could say, even as he, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by 'the faith of the Son of God.'" (Gal. 2:20.) Far from this being a mere expression of a mystical or beautiful inner conception of things relative to one's life in Christ, to Paul it was **a fact** of personal experience. It was to him as "the power that raised Christ from the dead" working in him, and by that **working** he knew its reality. He is, therefore, no visionary exponent of that which in practical life may never be expected. It was his own experience as a branch in Christ the Vine that made him intensely in earnest to bring others into a similar knowledge and experience of Christ. Such was his great objective in that day far past, and his disappointments we know. Would he find it any different now if here among us? How many would he find even now with Christ formed in them, Christ put on, and the life of Christ manifested through them? Let us each examine himself.

Christ, our Foundation and Chief Corner-Stone

Paul, as "a wise master builder," so styled by himself, looked well to his Foundation Stone. Well he knew that the only substantial foundation on which the superstructure of gold, silver, and precious stones could be built, was none other than Jesus Christ. He affirms positively that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) To the Apostle nothing was more clearly apparent than the profound truth set forth in our Lord's great lesson clothed in the illustration of the vine and its branches. Imposing buildings may indeed be erected, and such have always been numerous enough, but sooner or later not one stone is left upon another. Wherever there is absent the true union with Christ, growth is only seeming and deceptive; the fruitage, though apparently abundant, is inferior to that which will assure an abundant entrance into the inheritance of those approved of God. Thus it is that with a steadfast purpose and consistency Paul never overlooked the fact, nor allowed his converts to forget it, that only by a proper faith in Christ, and by a correct appropriation of the life-renewing power that is in Him, can any attain to Christian maturity. This relationship, he wanted it understood, is practical, yea, imperative. He was under no delusion, such as many seem to entertain, namely, that such a conception of maturity is too high, therefore a dangerous teaching, calculated to dishearten and stumble weak saints. Paul was too consistent to think of lowering God's perfect standards **down to the level** of human weakness; therefore he ever sought to raise that confessed weakness up to the robust strength of being "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

The Apostle's admirable impatience with substitutions and subversions is plainly evident. He had no patience with substituting tenets of belief for the practical outward evidences of the power of Christ in the life. He could never agree to sanction any teaching which would make a philosophical ramification about Christ's redemptive work more important than the personal possession of Christ in the loving heart affections. He did not rebuke the "foolish Galatians" because they had deliberately let go of the tenet of justification by faith, but because they had accepted a perverted concept, and by doing so had let go of Christ to the degree of making Him something of a half Savior. They had turned from the power of a Christ crucified for their offenses and raised again for their full justification, to the acceptance of the specious argument by which they had been so easily bewitched, and by which many are still as greatly confused. In dealing with this situation Paul is allowing no middle ground, but frankly tells them, "Christ will be of **no benefit to you.**" (Gal. 5:2, Diaglott.) He would sweep away **all** false views of the work of Christ and the conditions of true relationship to Him. To Paul, anything added to Christ was a false teaching. And it matters not what **we** add to Christ, the wrong is in adding anything at all. Let the fact be once seen in its true Scriptural aspects, and it must be admitted that if any perverted view such as Paul is dealing with can make Christ **of no effect**, then every phase of our spiritual development is retarded thereby. It follows that our growth up into Christ, our putting on Christ, and having Christ formed in us, is seriously hindered; therefore Christian maturity will not be attained.

Believers Chosen in Christ

All that pertains to the Church begins and ends in Christ. The high calling of the Church is no afterthought with God. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Is it any wonder angels desire to peer into the favor arranged for us? Do we ourselves come anywhere near a real appreciation or understanding of it? What a profound revelation is given us in the words of Jesus Himself, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which bath sent Me draw him," and, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." (John 6:44, 37.) A similar insight into the eternal purposes of God in respect to the Church is furnished us by Paul in Eph. 1:3-6: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He bath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He bath made us accepted in the Beloved." By grace He called us in Christ, accepted us in Christ, made us secure in Christ, and we are His "workmanship created in Christ Jesus." Christ is the Door by which we enter the fold of God. He is always the Way to God, and the Truth of God manifested to us. He is the Life of God imparted to all who come to God by Him. And being thus identified with Christ, what then? Let the Scriptures answer. "**Of His fulness** have all we received, and grace for grace." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it **more abundantly.**" He, is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the, power** that worketh in us." (John 1:16; 10:10; Eph. 3:20.) Thus seen, Christian maturity is a progressive and a, blessedly possible attainment, and certainly they who seek it shall not fail to find it.

Limiting the Holy One of Israel

In Moffatt's translation of Psalm 78 there is an interesting rendering of verses 41 and 42. Remembering the too frequent tendency to hold back from launching out into the deep and letting down our nets for a larger draught, we will find it worth our while to ponder over these words to natural Israel. "With **doubts, of God** again and again, that pained the Majestic One of Israel. **They remembered** not His power." The entire Psalm contains much of this lament. Israel limited God by unbelief, according to Hebrews 3:19: "They could not enter in **because of unbelief.**" And was this not the very thing over which Jesus wept, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" God's arm was not shortened, nor His desire to open the windows of heaven and pour out overflowing blessings in any way diminished. Disobedience, broken covenants, multiplied human inventions substituted for true worship, all combined to shut away the things God delighted to give. These things connected with Israel's limited blessings, the Apostle tells us, are to be carefully considered by us, and taken to heart. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come. (1 Cor. 10:11.) How is it then with us? Can we say we have not been deficient in faith, or wanting in vision, therefore content to just go on resting on first principles of the plan of salvation? Or have we known the invigoration of an overpowering ambition such as Paul tells us was never absent from his spirit, and like him do we say, regardless of all present attainments, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." - Phil. 3:12-14.

From the various passages of Scripture we have thus far considered, how apparent it is that it is not our personal inability that prevent us from attaining the goal of Christian maturity. It is more often our deeply-rooted antipathy for fostering such expectations that stands in the way of putting on Christ as we should. We look at self and reduce the ideals to the level of our feebleness; whereas we should count on the promised outcome of God's power to begin and finish His own workmanship in us and for us. The proper viewpoint in this matter is that of remembering the certainty of the words of Jesus: "Without Me ye can do nothing." Let this be our humble confession always. Notwithstanding this acknowledged fact concerning our own inability, let us never cultivate a lower objective than, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Spiritual life is no self generated accomplishment, but a life imparted from a source above us, as illustrated in the vine and its branches. Our possibilities are thus limited only by the measure of our willingness to act in appropriating faith. We **must** believe God when in reference

to our recognized and confessed weakness, He says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." No weakness need therefore discourage us or provide us with an argument against our being thus made "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." What is this but our being, as Paul has prayed, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man"? Yes, what are these inspired words but the ground for our right to sing our confident song from the heart, and with the understanding also.

"Of victory now o'er Satan's power,
Let all the ransomed sing,
And triumph now in every hour,
Through Christ, the Lord, our King."

Such promises, Paul would assure us, are the measure of strength God will give, to the end that we may have what He wants us to receive. Are they impossible of being known experimentally? Listen yet once more to the Apostle's confident assurance "God is witness, that that word of ours which was toward you is not yes and no: for that Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us---was not yes and no, but was yes in Him. For **whatever be the promises of God**, they are in Him yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God." - 2 Cor. 1:18-20, Diaglott.

The great blessings God has for us do not lie on the surface as a rule, but need to be earnestly sought after as for hidden treasure. The matter of putting on Christ being the greatest of present attainments, it is therefore reserved for those who seek for it in faith and sincerity. God **will** fulfill His promises. Let us pursue our *search*. - *Contributed*.

(To be continued)

Anti-Christian Appeal Repudiated

Schalom Ben-Chorin, one of Israel's most liberal thinkers, has written an article on "Christian Missions and Freedom of Religion" in *Jedioth Chadashoth*, a German-Jewish paper published in Israel, protesting an appeal, issued December 20, 1952, by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel against the activities of the Christian missions in Israel. The appeal was addressed to all rabbis and religious officials. This edict of the Chief Rabbinate "calls to battle against the activities of the missionaries. It begins with the words: "Over four hundred emissaries of Satan, missionaries -- among them baptized Jews, traitors to their origin, have settled like a swarm of locusts on the land."

"Any thoughtful Jewish citizen, writes Schalom Ben-Chorin, "will have read this tirade of abuse with dismay and surprise, for it is unworthy of the highest religious authority and its entirely justified fight against the Christian mission. . . . We must address the Christian missionaries with Voltaire's words, 'I deplore your views, but I will fight to the last breath for your right to express them.' Any other attitude is unworthy of a democracy.

"Two days after this edict of the Chief Rabbinate, Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister, declared in the Knesseth (the Israeli Parliament) that the new government would defend complete freedom of religion and opinion, and that it would not tolerate any religious compulsion, from whatever side it might come. The only limits to freedom of opinions would be fixed by the security of the State and the honor of the individual. So understood, the Chief Rabbinate has both the right and duty to oppose the Christian with all due sharpness, but without insulting the missionaries. The watchword must be spiritual combat.

"The edict of the Chief Rabbinate attacks in particular those of the missionaries who are *mumarin bogdim*, traitorous baptized Jews. But the zealous chief rabbis have not take the trouble really to get to know their enemy, which should be their first strategic task. Today's Hebrew Christians of Israel are fundamentally different from the *meshumndi* (apostates) baptized in days gone past. Normally baptized Jews- left the Jewish community, and assimilated themselves to the nation in whose midst they lived, to its land, and to its dominant church.

"Here things are quite different. Those Christians of Jewish origin in Israel who are linked together in the Jewish-Christian alliance, stress their national membership of the Jewish people and their loyalty to the State of Israel; they try to combine their national-Jewish position with their Christian religious conviction; more than that, they try to bring out the Hebrew-Jewish aspect of the Christian worship of God in Israel. . . . The phenomenon is something entirely new, and we must come to an understanding with it. The new missionaries are not asking for the abandonment of Jewish nationality but seek the Hebrew Israeli of Christian faith."

Ben-Chorin ends his article as follows: "The wind must be taken out of the sails of missionary work proper by a work of Jewish-Christian understanding. Instead of the stealing souls on one side, and tirades of abuse on the other, we must have, a Jewish-Christian spiritual dialogue, which will lead the two sides to know one another and so to enrich one another religiously. In place of opposition, we must have fellowship and work together." - E. P.

- *The Restitution Herald*.

Encouraging Messages

My dear and beloved brethren in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and from our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord, you that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Rejoice Zion, Christ has come, the King of Glory.

I salute you all lovingly in the name of our dear Almighty Father, his Son Jesus Christ, our dear Head and Savior, and I salute you too in the name of the Truth, the present harvest truth -- precious harvest truth, sweet shout from heaven, joyful voice of the Archangel, Christ. I salute you all lovingly.

From my birth, I have been of the Christian faith, but never did I love anybody because he was a Christian. I did not know in those days, what Christian love was -- I never even felt in my heart the love for Christ. We never thought about such things. Even if some one would ask me if I loved God, I would say: I don't know; I never thought of it. If some one would ask me: Do you believe that Christ came from heaven? my reply would be, I do not believe such a thing. All the faith I had was that there is a God, and this knowledge I obtained not from the Church, not from school, but from the speech of the mighty works of God in the universe. My church attendance was regular, and in this was the expression of all my Christianity.

Such was my Christian religion until my thirty-first year of age when, in August, 1926, I came in contact with some brethren from whom I bought the six volumes of "*Studies in the Scriptures*." ... These books did for me just what Deacon Philip did for the eunuch of Ethiopia. Our dear Lord Jesus sent to me Brother Russell as he sent Philip to that Ethiopian brother, and I took Brother Russell in my house in 1926 and have him unto this day, and I continue to learn from him, how to walk in the steps of Jesus. The mouth of Brother Russell served me as a key that opened to me the treasures of my Bible. I had a Bible, but my Bible did not speak to me, even as seven unseen spiritual seals did hold it closed from the Prophets and the angels of God. Oh, I now know my Bible! Jesus did come. He spoke to me (as he did to you), but not by vision, or by appearing to me as to Abraham, but as he said in Matthew 24:45-47, that he in his second parousia (presence) would speak to us through *one* of us whom he calls a faithful and wise servant.

Such is my belief, dear brethren, and this belief through God's grace and Jesus' care saved me from falling away from the present truth, and from being chained to any organization, large or small. My library is very rich and pure and rare. I have the *Studies in the Scriptures* in English and Greek languages, the seven volumes of the Reprints, Brother Russell's Sermon Book, What Pastor Russell Said About the Covenants, Atonement, Sin-Offering, etc., Convention Reports, the book, Hundreds of Questions Answered by Brother Russell, Volumes I and II of The Great Pyramid Passages by dear brethren John and Morton Edgar, and many other wonderful books and booklets, all strictly in harmony with present truth.

Besides all these blessed books, I have four Bibles -- English, Greek, Russian, and Bulgarian. These four languages I know well and by the comparison of the translations from the Hebrew of different passages, I obtain a better understanding. This made me free from the bondage of dogmatism and from organizations, and chained me strongly and forever to Jesus. Jesus is the life, the way, and the truth -- not the churches, not dogmatism, not organizations. I learned this sacred way of salvation from Jesus, but through Brother Russell, through the meat in due season (the time of His parousia) which I received from that dear, faithful and wise servant, whose life,

works, and faith always are a strong inspiration to me. Now I know my Bible; now I am a Christian; now I love most supremely our dear, loving Almighty God. Now I know my dear Savior that he came to *us*; he became poor for us, suffered and was crucified for us, and God raised him from the dead. Now he has come again to reign and to save all the willing to life through obedience to the new King and to the regulations of the *new* Kingdom. Now I understand what it is to be a Christian. Now I love my Christian brethren, for they are Christ's. I *do* love their thinking, their heart, their speech, their *writings*. I love their prayers, their joys, their sufferings. I see Jesus in them. Oh thank God that he drew me to Jesus and opened to me the mystery hidden from men and angels.

You, dear brethren, surely never expected a foreigner and 9,000 miles from America to have such treasures in his library, and much less would you expect that foreigner to have those treasures in his brain and in his heart.

I want to thank you for the "Herald." It is a blessing always to me. I am sorry that no one else here knows the English, but I make translations and give discourses in the Class, and I do everything *in* my power to convey to others all that I know of the truth by God's grace. I am the elder of a Class here of ten brethren, but now the conditions have become so bad that we are like a ship that is sinking and full of water. Spiritually, we *all* stand fast *in* the present harvest truth, but unemployment and bad conditions in this country -- poverty, disaster -- all work against *us*. Thank you, brethren, for your letter.

I know *my* letter is full of grammatical errors, but you will remember that this language is foreign *to* me. I learned it by myself, without the help of any teacher.

Your brother in the service of the Truth,
P. P. -- Greece.

Dear Brethren:
Greetings in our dear Redeemer's name.

I am enclosing herewith \$1.00 for renewal of my subscription to the "Herald."

I would like to express my deep appreciation of the spiritual flood contained in this magazine. I enjoy every visit of the "Herald." In fact, I keep the back numbers, and I am now re-reading and re-studying the articles, and I find them more wonderful at each reading. I like them because they are articles that pertain so much to the growth and spirituality of his Church. They encourage us to keep this hope set before us and to press on though we feel so unworthy of the calling. But he has promised us if we abide in him and he in us, and if we live in Christ, he will uphold us and by his grace we may be overcomers. We see the crumbling everywhere, and we know the time is near for the Kingdom which the world needs though they are unaware of it in their plight and hopelessness.

I will remember all you dear ones in your ministry for the brethren' and your work for Christ, as I remember all the dear ones of the Lord in every place, those known and unknown.

Yours in the one Hope and in the Love of God and Christ,
M. C. -- Fla.