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Calamities - Why Permitted

*"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:
I the Lord do all these things." - Isaiah 45:7.*

Since the publication of the JulyAugust issue of the "Herald," our country has experienced a number of hurricanes, tornados, and floods, with disastrous results, and reports have reached us that people in other countries have undergone similar calamities, including earthquakes.

The severity and extent of these catastrophies brought forcibly back to mind an article written by Brother Russell in the early days of his ministry. Believing the lessons he drew at that time are peculiarly applicable to todays' events, we have condensed the following paragraphs from his pen, written in February 1884. - Ed. Com.

ACCOUNTS of the widespread and destructive floods of these past months, with their accompanying distress, have ere this reached you through the daily press. Such like events as floods, fires, earthquakes, tornados, pestilences, cyclones, etc., have always elicited much comment both from press and pulpit regarding their cause.

The most commonly attributed cause is that God has sent the calamity as a special punishment for supposed greater wickedness of the people of the suffering districts, and as *a warning* to others. Another and growing view is that it just *happened so* from *natural* causes; and that, if there is a God, he either cannot help such things, or does not care to do so. For our part, we cannot endorse either of these views.

The reasons which lead people in general to suppose these calamities to be "special judgments" are founded, we believe, mainly on the dealings of God with Israel, upon whom he sent calami-

ties, captivities, etc., as national punishments for national sins. But let us remember that Israel was a peculiar people, chosen of God for a special purpose, and, like the saints of the Gospel Age, dealt with in a peculiar manner, different from the world. To them he said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) Israel was the only nation which Jehovah directly governed; therefore he chastised their sins, and made his promises to them, while other nations were left under the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world, until he whose right it is, shall have come and established the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens.

While remembering that God has used calamities, such as the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom, as punishments and examples of an overthrow of the ungodly, it should not be forgotten that those were examples of those who should afterward live ungodly. And these *examples* are not examples of God's dealings in the present time, but are examples of the punishment or destruction awaiting the finally incorrigible during or at the close of the Millennial judgment period, or day. That Peter so applies those calamities as examples of the *future*, see 2 Peter 2:4-9.

In Jesus' day some had the same impression, that great disasters indicated God's special displeasure; but Jesus corrected them, saying: "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise PERISH."

These words of Jesus contain the key to what we believe is the correct view of this subject in the last word; *perish*. The fact is that the *great calamity* DEATH, of which pestilences, earthquakes, floods, etc., are only *incidentals*, has passed upon ALL MEN, because all are sinners. (Rom. 5:12.) We have become so accustomed to *death*, the great calamity which is rapidly swallowing up the whole race, that it, the greatest of all losses, and the cause of all others, is looked upon as a proper and natural matter. If, however, things were properly considered, *death* as a whole would be seen as the great calamity, and the floods, etc., which *only hasten* it to a few, would be of comparatively little importance.

As *death*, the great calamity and curse, was caused by sin, so all these calamities spring from the same cause, and are under the control of him that has the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14), whose dominion and power, thank God, is soon to be taken away and given to the Prince of Peace. As death is the result of sin, so are pestilences, tornados, etc.

By one man's disobedience, *death* with its numerous channels of sickness and disaster passed upon all men, and those who meet it in one way avoid it in others; but all meet it in some form.

This will be apparent when we remember that when Adam became a sinner, not only did the curse of *death* fall upon him, but the entire dominion of his kingdom -- the earth -- suffered, and is in a cursed condition. (Gen. 3:17.) For a time Satan is permitted to usurp the dominion of earth, and while seemingly working out his own plans, he at the same time acts as the agent of justice, to execute the penalty of sin. This being true, he is the one who by permission exercises the destructive power upon the earth; and Jehovah does not interfere because mankind has justly come under the curse of a violated law, death; and because man is gaining a valuable lesson under the present dominion of evil and death, which will benefit him when the *curse* is lifted not only legally, but *actually*, by the Redeemer who for *this cause* was manifested "that he might destroy DEATH [the great catastrophe in all its forms] and him that hath the power of death, [and who brings to pass the various calamities] that is, the devil."

As soon as the new Prince, Immanuel, takes possession of the Kingdom, a great change will begin, both in the world of nature and of mankind. The curse being canceled will be removed, and the blessings purchased by the "precious blood of Christ" will be bestowed. So great will be the change under the new administration, that in symbol it is called a new heavens (new spiritual ruling power). Behold he will make all things new; he will re-new or restore all things to harmony with God, and to a condition which from God's standpoint, is "very good."

Hence we regard those disasters, not as special punishments, but as parts of the general curse, results of sin; but all working out in harmony with God's design an ultimate good to those rightly *exercised* thereby. We have heretofore seen that the Prophet Job was made a type of mankind; that the disaster and trouble and losses which befell him illustrated the losses sustained by mankind, and that his restoration to favor and after-blessing, foreshadowed the "restitution of all things" to mankind. (Acts 3:19.) And we call to mind that the source of his trouble was Satan (Job 1:12), whom God in wisdom *permitted* to have power over him. As then the whirlwind, etc., was the agent of Satan, so we claim it is today. So, too, it was in Jesus' day. Jesus did not go about opposing the Father's will. If the Father had *caused* the death of Lazarus, would Jesus have opposed him by undoing his work? If Jehovah had caused the storm on the Sea of Galilee, which nearly overwhelmed the Lord and his disciples, would Jesus have been justified in stilling that tempest? But if the sickness and death and storms which Jesus counteracted were the work of Satan, the present "prince of the world," then all is clear, and we and all creation groan and travail and wait for the glorious reign of the new prince, whose relief is foreshadowed by the acts of his earthly ministry, praying, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth." When the night of sin and suffering and weeping is over, and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings for the various troubles of man and of earth, the mists of ignorance will be dispelled, and it will be seen that not Jehovah, but man's sin and his present prince, Satan, has been the direct cause of earth's woe and sorrow.

"Thy Will be Done"

"Thy will be done! I say it joyfully;
There is no sorrow for me in the thought --
No dread of coming shadows-nor a path
Whereon my feet might find it hard to tread:
Thou art my Father! Could I fear Thy will?
Or couldst Thou ever send me aught but good?
Nay, I remember how Thy mighty love
Was fixed upon me in the far-off years,
And led me from the darkness of the night,
And set me in the shining of Thy face,

Rejoicing over me; and how, today,
This life of mine is rich with untold wealth
From Thine own treasure-store: My Father-God,
A glad hope lives within me for the days,
Wherein Thy hand shall guide me, and Thy will
Appoint my part and order all my way,
Because I know that Thy desire for me

Is higher than my highest thoughts of good,
And better than my best: Thy will be done --
Thy will at all times overruled by love!"

Treasures Laid up in Heaven

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." - Matthew 6:19-21.

PLEASURE, delight, joy, comfort all these sentiments are suggested to us by the word *treasure*. Our thoughts, our hopes, our plans, center there. Our treasure is the inspiration of our lives, the incentive to energy, perseverance and endurance, for the hope which it enkindles. Most people have treasures, but they are generally such as yield slight satisfaction, because they are transitory and disappointing. How many have built their hopes upon earthly things only to find them but illusive baubles, mocking delusions, leaving the heart at last broken, crushed and barren! The treasures of wealth, fame, social distinction, of houses and lands, of friends and home and family, of power and influence, are subject to change and decay! And if the heart be centered in them, they are liable in a moment to be swept away, leaving the life desolate and despairing, all the more so because of the high hopes which they had inspired.

The wealth, laboriously gathered and husbanded with great care, may vanish in a night. The fame so dearly won may change to censure and reproach at the caprice of fickle public sentiment. The social prestige which bade you to the uppermost seats may a little later relegate you to the lowest seat, and your name may be cast out as evil and you be ostracized. Houses and lands and carefully hoarded belongings may disappear under the sheriff's hammer. Friends long trusted may suddenly grow cold and turn their backs upon you, and even become your enemies. The home you love must some time break up, the family be scattered or invaded by death. The love chat glows upon the home altar may flicker and become dim or extinct. How many have found the high hopes of youth and early life turn to ashes in a few short years or months!

THE BALM OF GILEAD FOR BROKEN HEARTS

To all of these the Word of the Lord should appear with special force, when calling them to come to him with their burdens and their broken hearts. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." (Psalm 34:18.) His love and his precious promises come like the sweet balm of Gilead to those who, sad and disappointed in the struggle of -life, come to Christ for rest and comfort, for life and healing. Many storm-tossed mariners upon life's ocean, discouraged and despairing, bereft of all hope, have found that these very experiences were the means of leading them to the haven of eternal refuge. There alone true blessing and safety can be found; there alone is the *real treasure*, far exceeding the choicest treasures of earth. . . .

Truly, in this our day, as never before perhaps, would all who have the spirit of a sound mind to *any* degree be longing for a treasure which will be secure, a rock upon which they may plant their feet, one which will securely hold in these days of stress and uncertainty, when men feel that everything is slipping from beneath their feet, when nothing earthly is sure, when fear with distress is on every hand. At such a time as this, how blest are we who are safe-sheltered in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, which cannot be shaken by the mightiest earthquake shock! How unspeakably precious is the treasure which we have laid up in heaven; for we know our treasure is safe, where no storms nor billows can touch it.

THE TREASURES WE LAY UP IN HEAVEN

The all-important question for those who seek this great treasure then is, How can we lay up treasure in heaven, and what kind of treasures are those which are to be stored up in the heavenly depository? We have the assurance of the Divine Word that everything that is pure, holy, and good is acceptable there. The very chiefest of all treasures is the personal love and friendship of God and of Christ. Jesus becomes to us "the fairest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely." He is an unfailing refuge in every time of need, our daily joy and solace and comfort.

When we have gained this treasure, we have gained the One that never changes, One whose love never grows cold, One from whom nothing can separate us—"neither death," which to his loved ones *will* now mean our blessed "change"; "nor life," which means further opportunities for suffering with him that we may also share his glory, and which permits further works of loving service for him whom we love; "nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers," for these cannot harm us who are sheltered in Christ; "nor things present, nor things to come"; for "all things shall *work* together for *our good*," and in every trial he will direct the issue that we may be able to bear it; "nor height" of temporary exaltation; "nor depth" of trouble or sorrow, for our refuge and strength is ever near; "nor any other thing" in creation, for he has promised to "keep the feet of his saints," and that nothing shall touch them as new creatures in Christ, and that his presence shall go with them wherever they may be. - Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Sam. 2:9; Luke 10:19; Exod. 33:14.

Nor will any other creatures either in heaven or in earth receive such marks of special favor as are and ever will be the portion of the beloved Bride of Christ. Although the whole family in heaven and in earth will be blessed through him, his wife, cooperating with him in his work, will alone be his companion, his confidante, his treasure. Hear the Lord's exhortation to the *Bride* class: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house [the ambitions, hopes, and aims of the children of Adam]; so shall the King [Jehovah's Anointed] greatly desire thy beauty [beauty of character, of heart-loyalty]; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." (Psalm 45:10, 11; Song of Solomon 4.) How unworthy we feel of so great honor and love from our beloved Bridegroom! And no wonder! When we look at all our imperfections, it seems that there is little in us to call forth such love and admiration. To think that the angels with all their purity and faithfulness should have been passed by; and that *we* poor, blemished mortals, should be chosen instead!

Is there not some mistake? Ah, no! We have the infallible words of inspiration to assure us that it is even so. This Bride of Jehovah's *Son* is to reign with him in the future over a fallen race; and who could so well sympathize with them in all their weaknesses and frailties as those who have themselves partaken of the same? And who could bear the infinite heights of glory to which the Lamb's wife will be raised, with such humility as those who realize that it was not through *any* worthiness of their own that they were chosen to so high an exaltation, but that it was all of Divine grace? Clad in the glorious robe of our Bridegroom's furnishing, we can stand all complete, even now, in the eyes of Jehovah. And possessing the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, the faith that trusts under every condition, the love that delights to do the Father's will, we are lovely in the eyes of our Beloved, our Bridegroom and our King.

Having this confidence, we can with unspeakable joy and gratitude lay hold of the, exceeding great and precious promises which are ours through Christ, and without presumption *press* along the line toward the prize of our High Calling, humbly trusting that he who has begun the good work in us will complete it unto the *day of* our glorification with our Bridegroom in the heavenly Kingdom, when we shall be presented before the Father "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," gloriously complete and perfect, in the most absolute sense, fitted and prepared for the wonderful work which we shall share with our blessed Lord and King.

Listen to some of the blessed and inspiring promises with which the Father and the Son cheer the Bride: "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Ye "shall be mine, in that Day when I make up' my ' jewels." "I will give thee to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give thee a white stone [a precious token of love], and in the stone a new name written [the name of our Bridegroom, henceforth to be our name) which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "Lo, I am with you alway... "And if I go away, I will *come* again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also [and he *has* come, he is even now present, and will soon receive us unto himself forevermore]." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I *will* give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne." - Isa. 33:17; Mal. 3:17; Rev. 2:17; Matt. 28:20; John 14:3; 15:16; Rev. 2:10; 3:21.

Precious promises are these, wonderful words of life! Let us count them over and over again, that all their sweet significance may sink deep into our hearts and bring forth their blessed fruitage in our lives. *May* they cheer us in every dark and trying hour and reinforce our waning powers with renewed vigor, courage, and zeal, that we may press along the narrow way until indeed our "eyes shall see the King in his beauty. What wondrous treasures do we thus find laid up in heaven for *us*, because we have left the world and all its delusive- fancies and aspirations and have laid hold upon the things eternal! And while this glorious inheritance is to be the possession of all the faithful, the Apostle intimates clearly that our heavenly treasure may be augmented by special zeal and faithfulness under the peculiar trials of the present time....

But especially sweet will be the spiritual friendships begun and cherished here, which will bloom and blossom in still greater vigor when transplanted into heavenly soil and atmosphere. And what a treasure we shall find in the gratitude and love of those to whom we have ministered here in times of special need, and to whom we have carried the Living Water and broken the Bread of Life! Who can measure the joy unspeakable that shall be the heritage of the faithful when we shall find all these precious treasures beyond the veil!

When we view these treasures with unclouded eyes, and realize that they are ours forever, shall we not feel infinitely repaid for any sufferings and hardships we have borne in our brief earthly pilgrimage?

Then, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, let us keep our eyes steadfastly set upon the heavenly, eternal things. Let us more and more lay up treasures where "moth and rust cannot corrupt and where thieves cannot break through and steal." (Matt. 6:20.) If our hearts are upon the heavenly treasures, then the disappointments and *afflictions* of the present life cannot overwhelm us. Whatsoever things are worthy the aspiration of the spiritual sons of God are our real treasures, and they are the only things that are worth while. What care we for the illusive bubbles of this poor life, so soon to burst and disappear?

Then, as sings the poet:
"Let us touch lightly the things of this earth,
Esteeming them only of trifling worth,"

not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, if we faint not by the way, but with our pilgrim's staff in hand shall press along the heavenly road until we reach the goal of our hopes.

As the sun sinks at the dose of each day, and the shadows gather around us, how sweet to sing, "I'm one day nearer Home! We have nearly reached the mountain-top, and every day multiplies the evidences that the journey is nearing its end. Just how long it will be, we cannot know; probably it is best that we do not know. But we believe that it will not be very long.

-- W. T. - March 1, 1916

Israel Exhibits Dead Sea Scrolls

In recent years Israel has acquired seven Dead Sea scrolls, and for the first time, on July 29, they were displayed to the public. "The London Times" of July 30, 1957 under the above heading, gives the following interesting report. - Ed. Com.

First Public View From Our Correspondent

JERUSALEM (ISRAEL SIDE), JULY 29

The seven Dead Sea scrolls acquired by Israel since 1947, and dating back approximately to the turn of the first century B.C., were displayed to the public for the first time today. The scrolls, described by the president of the Hebrew University, Professor Benjamin Mazar, as "the greatest discovery of our age," are housed, together with the jars in which they were found, in a specially constructed vault of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Later they will be moved to a structure now being built and to be known as the "Shrine of the Book" in the library of the new university now rising on the western heights of this city.

CHALLENGE TO JORDAN

At the opening ceremony today both Professor Mazar and Dr. Ygal Yadin, who was responsible for the romantic tracking down and purchase of four of the seven scrolls, and who was formerly chief of staff of Israel's armed services, spoke of the great historical and spiritual value of the Dead Sea scrolls. Dr. Yadin, whose father, the late Professor Elcazar Sukenik, then head of the archaeological department of the Hebrew University, bought the first three scrolls from a dealer in Bethlehem, said that Israel had published facsimiles and photographs of the scrolls in its possession even before they were deciphered. He now challenged the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan to do the same. Thousands of fragments held by Jordan are still unpublished, including the famous copper scroll.

The three scrolls bought in Bethlehem by Dr. Sukenik were brought to Jerusalem on November 29, 1947-the day of the United Nations partition resolution. The next day the Jerusalem and Bethlehem areas were in a state more or less of civil war and no Jew could have safely reached the town of Bethlehem, much less have bought and brought away the three precious Dead Sea scrolls. By a curious coincidence it was Dr. Sukenik's son, Dr. Ygal Yadin, who suggested the bringing to Israel, this time from America, of the other four.

PURCHASE IN NEW YORK

These four scrolls had been taken to the United States by the Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox monastery of St. Mark, in the Old City of Jerusalem. The Metropolitan had hawked them around with relatively little success. One day Dr. Yadin, then in America, had his attention drawn to a small advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* offering four Dead Sea scrolls for sale. Dr. Yadin began negotiations for the purchase of the scrolls and, after receiving a financial guarantee from the Israel Government, was able, on July 1, 1944, to carry off the scrolls after having left behind with the Metropolitan a quarter of a million dollars.

The scrolls now on exhibition vary in size from a small Habakkuk, measuring 141 centimeters in length and about 13 in height (55 1/2 in. by 4 1/2 in.), to the Isaiah scroll, which is seven meters long and 25 centimeters high (7 ft. 6 in. by 9 3/4 in.). To some extent the scrolls have been damaged by vermin and dampness. Enough remains, however, to cast remarkable light on the spiritual movement of the day and on the likely origins of Christianity.

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 24

"God is not a man, that he should lie; ... hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" - Num. 23:19.

With the close of chapter 2, the Apostle has completed his argument that the case of the Jews, apart from a faith righteousness, is just as hopeless as in chapter 1 he has shown that of the Gentiles to be. Before going further, however, and drawing the obvious conclusions that would follow from his argument, he feels the need of anticipating and answering objections to the truths he has just developed. This he accomplishes in the first eight verses of chapter 3.

Objections Anticipated and Answered

These eight verses in their details form perhaps one of the most difficult passages in our Epistle, yet their main import is clear enough, and their prayerful study cannot fail to furnish lessons which will be helpful to us not only now but also when we reach the more detailed discussion of the same questions which the Apostle undertakes in chapters 9 to 11. The point of chief difficulty is to determine who the speaker is in each of the verses. Some have supposed that the Apostle is here introducing a dialogue between him self and the Jew, and they assume that it is a Jew who speaks in Rom. 3:1, 3, 5, and 7 and that the Apostle in Rom. 3:2, 4, 6, and 8 replies. Others, while agreeing in the main with this view, arrange the dialogue in a somewhat different manner. Amongst those who take these views are some concerning whose devotion and scholarship there can be no question.

It must be admitted, however, that the Apostle does not here make use of the formula, "But some one will say." It cannot be denied, therefore, that he "does not formally summon an objector into the area of dispute; and consequently does not formally transfer to the objectors mouth the queries he proposes." And it would appear to be more in harmony with the Apostles standpoint to suppose (with many of equal devotion and scholarship to those who take the other views) that the Apostle is simply proposing these questions to himself. By thus anticipating them, he gets the opportunity of meeting and removing them.

It is doubtless true, however, that they had actually been raised against him many times by Jewish objectors in the course of his ministry. To quote from another: "As the Apostle dictates, there rises before his mind a figure often seen by his eyes, the Rabbinic disputant. Keen, subtle, unscrupulous, at once eagerly in earnest, yet ready to use any argument for victory, how often that adversary had crossed his path, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Achaia! He is present now to his consciousness, within the quiet house of Gaius; and his questions come thick and fast, following on this urgent appeal [in chapter 2] to his, alas, almost impenetrable conscience."

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? -- Rom. 3:1

The word "then" connects this question with the concluding statements of the previous chapter. It is as if the Apostle were to say: But if indeed it be the case as I have just stated it to be, that it is the Jew inwardly who is the true Jew, and circumcision of the heart the true circumcision; if the virtuous among the Gentiles are as acceptable as any of the Jews, and indeed by their conduct actually condemn those Jews who transgress the Law; there may be some among you who are

drawing an erroneous inference, and, notwithstanding the fact that I have gone on record that "circumcision verily profiteth: (Rom. 2:25), believe that I really deny that it does profit and that I deny that the Jewish nation has any advantage at all over the rest of mankind. And the question may be forcing itself upon the minds of some of you: If the people whom God has *elected* and marked with the *seal* of this election are to be treated exactly the same as the rest of the world, wherein lies their surplus of privilege? The Apostle answers his own question thus:

Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. -- Rom. 3:2

Whose Are the Fathers

"Though the advantage of the Jew does not consist in exemption from judgment, he has an advantage, nevertheless, and it is very great." "If for example, we consider the Jews as susceptible of blissful influence in a hereditary manner, from the sires of their race, we see that they were highly exalted in privilege; for theirs were the patriarchal fathers -- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom. 9:5). If we consider them as susceptible of blissful influence from ordinances of religion, eminently significant and sublimely typical, we see again that they were peculiarly exalted in privilege, for their ritual of religious service was incomparably superior to that of all surrounding peoples (Rom. 9:4).

If we consider them as susceptible of blissful influence from a legislative code of pre eminent moral purity, we see again that they were peculiarly privileged, for the core of their whole legislative system was a singularly pure and complete edition of the moral law (Rom. 9:4). If we consider them as susceptible of blissful influence from the zealous ministrations of faithful, uncorrupted, and incorruptible instructors and reformers, we see again that they were singularly privileged in having had among them a succession of holy and devoted prophets who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

If we consider them as susceptible of blissful influence from a very special Divine providence guiding them, restraining them, constraining them, hedging them round and round in the way of shutting them off from evil, and in the way of shutting them up to good, surely we must see again that their surplus of privilege was very great. And if we consider it a means of peculiarly blissful influence to have a high ideal presented to the mind, and a lofty aspiration stirred within the heart; then in the exhibition of the Messiah to come, as the Seed *par excellence*, that was germinally enclosed in their distinctively Abrahamic seed, -- in this exhibition, as forming indeed the very central element of Jewish peculiarities, we see that the Jews enjoyed a privilege that was altogether unrivaled and inestimable. In short, view the subject as we may, the surplus of privilege belonging to the Jews is . . . *much in every respect.* "

To Whom Pertaineth the Promises

Had the Apostle intended to set forth the beneficial religious and moral influence exclusively enjoyed by the Jews in their national, domestic, and individual life, it is evident that he would have had a multitude of things to say. But it is equally clear that he would have been thus diverted from the object of his discussion. And hence he confines himself to establishing the point from which all the rest flows. This he does in the words: *chiefly [or in the first place] because that unto them were committed [or entrusted] the oracles of God.*

"When it is said that the Jews *were entrusted* with these oracles, the expression . . . indicates that it was not for their own benefit alone that the oracles were given to them. The revelation with which they were blessed was intended for wider dissemination. It was a boon for universal man.

And they were trustees, for a season, for the behalf of the human race. Nevertheless they were not simply Depositories in behalf of others. . . . They were not even simply Gods Library keepers. . . . They themselves were heirs of the blessing which was confided to their charge. The revelation, with all its gracious and glorious promises, was a Divine message to themselves. And in the possession of it, they enjoyed for themselves an inestimable privilege.

It was the Gospel in anticipation. It was the verbal word, mirroring the personal Word. It was the impersonal word of eternal life, mirroring him who is pre eminently, at once the personal Word of God and the Eternal Life of man. It was the glad tidings of salvation through the atonement that was to be. It was all this -- *with an additament*, the additament, namely of an assurance to the Jews that in consequence of the peculiarly intimate relation which the future Messiah was to sustain to their race they would meanwhile be distinguishingly blessed in the enjoyment of anticipative spiritual advantages, and eventually exalted into the dignity of being almoners of God -- the dispensers of some of the richest elements of his bounty, to the world at large. They would hence be emphatically -- in virtue of such prerogatives -- Gods favored people -- his national son, as well as his national servant, -- his peculiar people. In addition to the fundamental promises, relating to the provision of mercy made for men, as men, the *oracles* of the Old Testament are, as a matter of fact, bestrewed, from beginning to ending, with gems of exceeding great and precious promises relating to the provision of favor made for the Jews, as Jews. God shewed his word [*Kri*, his words, his oracles] unto Jacob; his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they [the nations in general] have not known them " (Psa. 147:19,20).

"To insist upon this immense privilege is altogether to St. Pauls purpose here. For it is a privilege which evidently carries an awful responsibility with it. What would be the guilt of the soul, of the community, to whom those oracles were -- not given as property, but *entrusted* -- and who did not do the things they said?"

Jewish Privileges Great, Even Though Unimproved

But a further objection immediately arises:

For what, if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? -- Rom. 3:3

"It must be evident to every considerate reader that the *faith* of God here means Gods *faithfulness*: the same word in the original is, in one passage, translated *fidelity*, and has probably the same meaning in several others (Titus 2:10; Matt. 23:23; Gal. 5:22); and the connection plainly requires this sense in the passage before us."

The reply to the question is, *God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar. -- Rom. 3:4*

We have already remarked that some suppose that the words of verse 3 are not spoken by the Apostle in his own person. They imagine that the paragraph is a dialogue -- a dialectical debate; and that in this verse it is a Jewish objector who speaks. Such a view, how ever, fails to take into consideration the significance of the connection which the opening word translated "for" makes with the words of verse 2. Indeed some translate this word "and"; others translate it "but." To our understanding, however, verse 3 does but continue and vindicate the position which the Apostle has just taken as to the immense privilege enjoyed by the Jewish nation. It is as though he had said: I may well specify the possession of the oracles of God as a high privilege of the Jews -- *for*, whatsoever may be the actual treatment these oracles have received at the hands of my

countrymen, the possession of them is nevertheless, when intrinsically considered, an inestimable boon. "They were blessed in having the oracles, and in possessing the multitudinous concomitant advantages attached to the oracles, whether they improved their high privileges or not."

In What Did Their Unbelief Consist?

It has been questioned whether, when the Apostle says, "What if some did not believe?" he referred exclusively to the unbelief which had characterized their past history or whether he referred to their unbelief in and consequent rejection of the Messiah.

"The tense of the verb employed by the Apostle shows, as it appears to us, that the lines of his thought were running in the plane of the past -- that plane of things which covered the entire period when the Jews, as distinguished from the Gentiles, *were entrusted with the oracles of God*. But, logically, his reference was not confined to this plane. His eye swept, indeed, over the past ages; but it ranged down ward through those ages till it rested on what had been, and was still, transpiring since the fullness of the time had arrived and since that illustrious Person age had appeared, in whom the precious promises of God were yea and amen, and who, in his own grand personality, is the Consummation and the Sum of the oracles of God.

What matters it, says the Apostle, though some believed not? -- that is -- What matters it though many in the bygone ages have lived and died without faith in the true import of the oracles of God and thus without faith in the Great Propitiator? -- And what matters it, though many of their descendants now living are walking in their footsteps, have refused to believe that which is the very Sum and Substance of their own precious Scriptures? -- What signifies all this so far as the question of prerogative is concerned?" The possession of those oracles constituted a veritable and inestimable privilege to them, whether they believed in them or not.

The Chief Promises Conditional

Some have supposed that the reason the Apostle is able to affirm that the faithfulness of God will not fail, but that his promises to Israel will be made good to them (notwithstanding the unbelief of some), lies in the fact that there was within "nominal" Israel a secretly elected Israel in whose blessed experiences the promises would be realized. But the Apostles affirmation rests on no such grounds. Had he chosen he might have said: "For what if *none* believed?" Although all Israel had proved to be unbelieving, their want of faith would not in the least have evacuated or diminished or dimmed the faithfulness of God. What God had unconditionally promised, that he would unconditionally fulfill; and what was promised only conditionally would wait, with untarnished honor, for its fulfillment on the forthcoming of the condition.

Personal enjoyment of the chief blessings exhibited and promised in the oracles is suspended on the condition of *faith* ." When this faith was withheld, the blessings referred to could not be enjoyed; and yet the faithfulness of God in (conditionally) promising them and in (unconditionally) promising the propitiatory ground on which they rested is unimpeached and unimpeachable."

Let God Be True

"The Apostle does not, in this place, enter on the formal proof of the consistency of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the Divine promise. The main argument by which this consistency is established rests on the distinction between Jews by birth and Jews in spirit, stated in the end of

the preceding chapter; between the circumcision of the heart and circumcision in the flesh. To this argument he gives due prominence in the beginning of the ninth chapter; and we shall not now anticipate the illustration of it.

In the passage before us he assumes a different ground. He indignantly repels the implied charge against the Divine faithfulness, on account of its obvious and shocking impiety; its flagrant opposition to the necessary and acknowledged character of God.

It is as if he had said -- Let what will be the solution of the *seeming* difficulty, *this* assuredly can never be.

The immutable veracity of the God of truth must, at all events, be free from impeachment. Let not the suspicion of the contrary be harbored even for an instant. Let not the possibility of it be so much as supposed. Let the very thought be rejected, with shuddering abhorrence, as a thought that should never have been formed. Should the acknowledgment implicate all creatures in falsehood - - let God be true."

"The Apostle confirms his sentiment by a quotation from the fifty first Psalm: -- That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. The passage is quoted as it stands in the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament. In our English version the words are that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

"Without entering into any discussion of the causes that may have produced the diversities between the Septuagint translation and the original Hebrew, . . . we would remark in general that wherever the New Testament writers make their quotations from the Septuagint we may be sure the *sense* must be the same although the words may be somewhat different. If the writers of the Old and the New Testaments were inspired, this is a necessary inference from their inspiration. At the same time it ought to be observed that such quotations are by no means to be considered as giving an inspired sanction to the translation as a whole from which they are taken; but merely as confirming the correctness with respect to sense of the passage quoted. In the case before us the reader will perceive that the difference is merely verbal.

God is addressed in the passage by the penitent psalmist as an offended Sovereign and Judge. For such an One to be clear when he is judged is to have his character for righteousness and truth established when his conduct is tried. This amounts, in effect, to much the same thing with his being clear (that is clear of any fault or blame) when he judges -- impartially just in the sentence pronounced by him. While David, in these words, expresses with deep self abasement his personal conviction of the justice of God in visiting his sins with deserved punishment, he at the same time declares a universal truth, applicable in its full extent, to the whole of the Divine procedure. In this light his words are used by the inspired Apostle."

-- P. L. Read

Everlasting Love

"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

God's everlasting love! What wouldst thou more?
O true and tender friend, well hast thou spoken.
My heart was restless, weary, sad, and sore,
And longed and listened for some heaven-sent token:
And, like a child that knows not why it cried,
Mid God's full promises it moaned, "Unsatisfied!"

Yet there it stands. O love surpassing thought,
So bright, so grand, so clear, so true, so glorious;
Love infinite, love tender, love unsought,
Love changeless, love rejoicing, love victorious!
And, this great love for us in boundless store:
God's everlasting love! What would we more?

Yes, one thing more! To know it ours indeed,
To add the conscious joy of full possession.
O tender grace that stoops to every need!
This everlasting love hath found expression
In loving-kindness, which hath gently drawn
The heart that else astray too willingly had gone.

We thirst for God, our treasure is above;
Earth has no gift our one desire to meet,
And that desire is pledge of His own love.
Sweet question; with no answer! oh *how* sweet!
My heart in chiming -gladness o'er and o'er
Sings on -- "God's, everlasting love!
What wouldst thou more?"

-- *Frances R. Havergal*

"Riches of Glory"

Ephesians 3:14-21

(Continued from last issue)

THE Apostle, in continuing his prayer for the "saints at Ephesus" and "the faithful in Christ Jesus," beseeches the Father that they might "Know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." What does Paul mean? Can we take this as literally true and applicable to each member of the Church as individuals? We appreciate things by comparison. Does Christ's love for us surpass, say, that of a mother's love for her child? Pure mother love is the most self-sacrificing love on earth. It is instinctive not only in man but in the lower animals also. It is a little bit of God's heart, as it were, just as the marvelous instincts in the lower animals which enable them to accomplish things beyond the range of man's reason, is a little bit of the mind of God. But just as that which is done instinctively is on a much lower level than that which is the result of reason and judgment, so is it with all natural love, arising from instinctive impulse. Intense love and self-sacrifice for its own, is quite consistent with intense hate and the desire to destroy others opposed to that love. Within its own limits of the family, mother love is a beautiful symbol of the love of God for all his children. It is like a sample of sea water within the restricted limits of a cup, as compared with the illimitable ocean. How impossible it would be, however, for this mother love to contemplate Gethsemane and Calvary for her son on behalf of their enemies and deliberately to arrange for it in advance.

When Paul speaks thus of the love of Christ in this prayer, he speaks from the depths of his own experience. In Galatians 2:20, he says: "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. And yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*." A mother's love is like the knowledge surpassing love of Jesus, in that she bestows on her family as a whole, the whole of her mother love. Mother love, however, is not rationed so that the more children she has, the less of her love there is to go round. The love of Christ is the love of God, that "Immortal love, forever full, forever flowing free; forever shared, forever whole, a never ebbing sea." Incredible as it may seem, Jesus loves each of us with the whole of his love. Had you or I been the only one in all the world needing salvation, what he did for all, he would have done for you or for me. If a mother has four children and one of them is in such danger that she can save him only at the risk of her own life, she does not take a twenty-five per cent risk because he is only one of four. She does what mother love can't help doing; she goes all out to save her boy. So it is with Jesus. In the parable of the hundred sheep, only one was lost, but the shepherd left all the others and went all the way, in his utmost endeavor to save it and bring it back to the fold.

Paul's appreciation of this personal love of Jesus, shines through all his epistles and was the mainstay of his life. This it was that sustained him in all his sufferings for the Gospel's sake. The sublime summit of his great epistle to the Romans is reached in chapter eight, and the very topmost pinnacle is this same love of the Lord, his Lord and ours. How wonderful are Eph. 3:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD"

The idea in the above words seems to be that of being filled with all the overflowing superabundance that there is in God. As if we should say, The fulness of the Great Lakes in North America overflows in the glory of Niagara Falls. Or that the sun radiates into space everywhere surrounding it, its glorious, abundant wealth of light, heat, and power, of which our tiny planet partakes to its fullest capacity.

God is the perennial and inexhaustible Fountain of life, the Source of every blessing. Father Adam received of God's fulness at his creation. The lower orders of the animal creation in the progressive stages of their development had been partakers of God's bounty up to the level of their being, but for man it was reserved that he should be filled with all the fulness of God, as the image and glory of God. Were we to go to Niagara with a cup and fill it at the mighty falls, how small it would look in comparison. Yet, up to its capacity it too would be filled with the fulness of the Great Lakes behind.

What a great gulf separates man from the lower animals. He is as a god to them, so far beyond their understanding are the wonders of his intellect, his capacity to reason, the marvels of his imagination, above all of his moral sense. Although only a vestige now remains of his former greatness, the greatness of the ruins are eloquent of the glory of that which once was and of that which yet shall be, when the Times of Restitution have accomplished their divinely appointed work.

But Paul is speaking here not of the old creation, but of the new. What copper is to gold, perfect human nature is to the divine. God made man in his own image, a human likeness of himself. Of the New Creation, however, we are told: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to *the image of his Son.*" Not a human image but a divine image. Of man it was said: "After our likeness let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth." But of the New Creation it is written: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Filled thus with all the fulness of God, partakers of the divine nature, possessing a divine body with all its unimaginable properties and powers, what a glorious inheritance utterly beyond our finite comprehension awaits the Church beyond the veil. Here and now, however, we have an earnest of this inheritance. As a present possession we can be filled with all the fulness of God, through the possession of the holy spirit. Referring to our Lord, John says (John 1:16): "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Each grace in him through the power of the spirit can be reproduced in us, thus resulting in our being conformed to his image. Paul gives us a wonderful list of the results of the infilling here and now of this fulness of God. It comprehends everything the heart could wish for, leaving nothing to be desired. He speaks of it in terms of the choicest fruit. (Gal. 5:22, 23.) "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith." What lovely gardens our hearts would be; what delightful sources of fragrance and refreshment could they contain for others; what places of quiet retirement for ourselves, if the fruit of this heavenly tree was every where in evidence in vigorous, healthy growth? Ah, yes, we say, but how can I ever have such a garden? Listen now to what Paul has to say in the Doxology with which he ends his prayer:

"EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK"

Oh, for more of Paul's enthusiastic faith! See how he takes this statement, wonderful in itself, that *God is able*, and magnifies it sevenfold for us. "Unto him *that is able to do all that we ask*." How different from earthly fathers who find themselves powerless so often, through lack of means, to grant their children's requests for things in themselves innocent and good. But God is able to do not only all that we ask, but *all that we think*. There is nothing that we can think of that is beyond God's ability to grant us. But Paul continues, and inserts the word *above*, making it read, "above all we ask or think." But Paul is not satisfied even with this, and goes on to add another word, *abundantly* above; and yet another word, *exceeding* abundantly above. "Unto him that, is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," is his grand finale.

Paul is like some great master of music seated at an organ worthy of his skill and power, who has one of the grandest of themes to express and develop, entitled, "God is able." As we listen, softly come the opening strains, "Able to do all we ask." Then the music increases in volume as the theme develops into "Able to do all we ask or think." Then as other stops are brought into requisition and more power is applied, the exquisite music swells with the next movement into "Able to do above all we ask or think." This leads us on to the grand crescendo and climax which thunders and throbs through the great cathedral in waves of richest harmony: "Unto him that is able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church."

This is not merely abstract thinking, theoretical reasoning. It is not based upon what God has done in his mighty works in far-off places and far-off times, but upon what God is doing *in us here and now*. Notice the wonderful truth that Paul adds to all the foregoing, telling us that it is all "according to the power *that worketh in us*." The power was laid on at Pentecost and has been available to every member of the Body of Christ since. All we have to do is to switch it on by the exercise of faith. Do we find ourselves always doing so?

How exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think were God's dealings with Israel. The ten plagues culminating in the death of Egypt's firstborn; the deliverance through the Red Sea after the seemingly hopeless position at the water's edge; two millions of men, women, and children in the wilderness for forty years: guided through the trackless desert, supplied with water in the sandy wastes, provided with sustenance in lands where no crops could grow. Surely all this was exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think.

Yet of Natural Israel it is said, "They limited the Holy One of Israel." Thirty eight years before they did so, they could have entered the promised land. The forty spies which were sent out brought back a glowing account that it was even as God had promised, a land flowing with milk and honey. In proof they brought back a huge bunch of grapes which it took two men to carry. But along with this glowing account of the land, all but two of the forty spies reported that it was quite impossible for Israel to go in and take possession of it. The cities were impregnable, with walls which reached up to heaven. The men of the cities were giants before whom they seemed as grasshoppers. And so "they could not enter in because of unbelief." - Heb. 3:18.

How is it with us? Do we ever find ourselves wandering in the wilderness when we should be resting in the enjoyment of the promised land? Do we listen to the voices within of unbelief or act on the inspiration of faith? Are we free of all trace of care, worry, and anxiety? Knowing that God is so superabundantly able, do we think big things about God and ask big things from God? Is my faith such that I rest in complete assurance that above all I ask or think; nay, abundantly above all I ask or think; or does even that, not sufficiently express the fulness of my faith so that I say, "Exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think God is able" to meet every contingency? A

contemplation of this wonderful prayer should verily make us realize that God gives to his children "according to the riches of his glory."

"UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS"

This last portion of Paul's prayer underlines what God expects of us in view of all the provisions he has made for us from his riches in glory. In rendering his report to the Father in John 17, our Lord said, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." His mission on earth, to glorify God, was passed on to his Church, collectively and individually. "Unto him be glory in the Church," through the person and power of Christ Jesus our Head and Pattern. The ultimate question which each of us must put to ourselves is, therefore, Is God being glorified in me? Our constant aim should be to make this true day by day, so that like our Lord we might be able to make report with joy at the end of the way.

God's purpose is that there shall be unto him glory in the Church *by* Christ Jesus, and this not only throughout the Gospel Age, but "throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." What wonderfully long views the Bible gives us! The outlook on the future from the standpoint of the world and the standpoint of the Christian is like the contrast between an outlook over the slums and that over the wide open spaces of some beautiful stretches of God's country. Think of the glorious panorama of sea, mountain, and sky that you may have witnessed in the highlands. There as we have looked upon range on range of mountains seemingly endless in the blue distance, we may have thought how very suggestive of the expression we have here, "throughout all ages, world without end." In the foreground of the picture we think of that noble Millennial mountain of the Lord concerning which the Bible has so fully informed us. But what of all these other peaks fading away into the blue distance of the ages to come? What is the content of Ephesians 2:4-7: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"? What do these ages to come have in store for us from the "riches of his glory"? Our reply must be, "Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even also as we are known." But here and now we express as our heart sentiments:

"I stand all astonished with wonder,
And gaze on the ocean of love;
And over its waves to my spirit
Comes peace, like a heavenly dove."

My Prayer

Grant me, O Father, according to the riches of thy glory, to be strengthened with might by thy spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; and that I might be rooted and grounded in love, and thus be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the mystery of thy will in Christ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and so to be filled with all the fulness of God. Thou art able to do for me exceeding abundantly above all I can ask or think, according to the power of thy spirit working in me; enable me therefore to live to thy glory as a member of thy Church here and now, and throughout all ages, world without end, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

- A. D. Kirkwood, Scot.

Faithful Branches of the True Vine

"I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." - John 15:5.

BEAUTIFUL indeed are the diversified illustrations of Christian life and experience made use of by our Lord in his wonderful words of life. To him many things in nature were fitting symbols of God's designs in the higher realms of his purposes-the natural law finding a larger expression in the spiritual world. The things not seen, were thus brought within the scope of our comprehension by the things which are seen. Hence "the Kingdom of heaven" in some of its many aspects, is likened unto a net, a field, a lost treasure, a wandering sheep. Each illustration employed contains its own particular lesson, and all combined furnish us with a very general picture of the works of God. What a wide field for study is thus opened up to us, in which the man of God may find "doctrine," "reproof," "correction," and "instruction in righteousness."

The grapevine as used in the chapter from which our text is taken, is full of significance. Here, we have the real facts of Christian experience clearly set forth. What better illustration could be used to teach so many of these important facts as the vine and its branches. The need of a complete unity with the only possible source of life and fruitfulness is clearly portrayed. The vine is ever saying to its numerous branches, "Without me ye can do nothing." Its very nature and characteristics proclaim its very special need of the care of a husbandman, and without whom its ultimate end must be destruction as a useless cumberer of the ground. In its creation the vine and branches were designed to attain marvelous ends, producing, it is claimed, one of the most perfect fruits found in the earth, containing an unusually large amount of the important elements needed in the human body. But to attain this great end the most drastic treatment in the way of pruning and training were foreordained to be its salvation. These are some of the lessons Jesus would teach us by this illustration. The ultimate objective is "much fruit," if we are branches in him as the Vine, and separation from him will eventually mean fruitlessness. This abundant fruitage he assures us is within the bounds of possibility for all who truly abide in him.

It is not difficult to understand that a branch must derive its life from the vine upon which and out of which it grows. The life-giving juices which the vine draws from the earth giving it life and leaves, must run out into the branches also. A branch can not bear even leaves unless its unity with the vine is real, "no more can ye," says Jesus, unless "Ye abide in me." Until there is on the part of the Christian a real union of heart and life with Christ the Vine, there can be nothing, no true faith, no real joy or experience in spiritual things, no true delight in the Word of God, and no intimate communion with God; therefore nothing of the evidences of eternal life will be found. This law in nature and in grace is immutable; hence the importance of the lesson before us.

THE BRANCH A PARTAKER OF THE VINE

But if, the illustration emphasizes the fact that "much fruit" must be found on each branch as evidence of its continued place in the vine, there is nevertheless abundant assurance given that no impossibility is being demanded. The Husbandman is One thoroughly competent to produce such an abundant fruitage, for he can never fail in his undertakings, and the Vine is a source of inexhaustible supply, never diminished however much the branches may draw the vitality needed to produce "much fruit." The giving out of this vitality does not impoverish him, nor withholding make him richer. The branches can never overdraw the strength of the One who has said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." On the contrary, he

so desires us to be strong, vigorous, fruitful branches that he urges us to partake freely of the life he so delights to impart. As God in ancient days has said to his people, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," so Jesus is ever saying to his followers, Open thy heart and life wide to me, and I will fill it with "much fruit" whereby God will be glorified. He is able "to make all grace abound toward you," says the Apostle, "that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work." (2 Cor. 9:8.) Truly, then, if we would bear much fruit to his praise, "what more can he say than to us he has said" to assure us that in us and for us "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that "worketh in us." - Eph. 3:20.

Our Lord's illustration teaches most certainly that the branch partakes very definitely of the vine on which and out of which it grows. Its origin is in the vine, and it conforms strictly to God's law of creation-every "fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind." The vine feeds the branch with the same nourishment with which it is itself sustained. Thus the branch bears an identical likeness to its parent vine. Is there on the vine a peculiar kind of bark and form of leaf, so is there on the branch. There is the same kind of wood fiber, the same color and texture, the same juices flowing through all. The vine imparts life to the branch and is at the same time reproducing itself in that branch, thus emphatically making it a partaker of its own nature. It is the simple principle of like producing like. How surprising it would be to find a vine imparting this life-giving power in this way, and hickory, cherry, plum, or peach branches springing out of its side. But such monstrosities do not occur in nature. The branch of the vine will always bear an unmistakable likeness to the sustaining stem from which it receives its life.

CHRIST'S MEMBERS ARE CHRISTLIKE

Christ is indeed the true vine, and his members unquestionably should partake of his nature. When he imparts to us a new spiritual life, does he not promise to thereby give us of his own characteristics? Christ's people, members of his Body should be Christlike, for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." And what are some of these outstanding characteristics, which if manifested in us give evidence of our being in the relation of branches to the vine? For answer, the Apostle would say, "We have the mind of Christ," and again, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5.) To have the mind of Christ would surely be to have the spirit or disposition of Christ. It would therefore mean Christ living in us, controlling our lives, possessing our hearts, and reproducing his likeness, his nature in us. Thus the promises embraced in Peter's statement would include promises pertaining to this life in its daily round of work and warfare, as well as such promises which in their very nature cannot be fulfilled until after the second veil is passed. Meeting the conditions underlying all these promises will little by little result to us in increasing measures of the spirit or disposition of Christ.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED

Possessing the life of Christ in our hearts will reveal that new springs of action are operating in us. New tastes and desires are kindled in our hearts and we become more and more copies of God's dear Son. Is there in Christ a delight in holiness? So is there in the true Christian, yea a consuming desire to be holy as God is holy. Is there in Christ a spirit of love? So is there in the Christian; his life will reflect that love in word and deed if he be really in Christ. Is there in Christ a spirit of meekness? So will there be in his disciple the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. Is there in Christ a great desire for the salvation and blessing of others?

So there will be in the disciple; for contact with Jesus must bring us into perfect accord with his spirit of love and consideration for others. Is there in Christ a desire for intimate communion with God? So is there in the true disciple; for such true union with Christ begets an ever-increasing

longing for close communion with the Father. Is there in Christ a definite hatred of sin? So is there in the Christian united to him; for it is impossible to be in union with Christ and at the same time in connivance with sin.

Thus the new life which the Vine imparts to us and which constitutes one a Christian, is a life begotten of God, and therefore must of necessity bear the nature of Christ. God begets children in his own likeness. No amount of grace would make a Christian omnipotent or omniscient; yet grace will, nevertheless, make us like Christ. The Christian who really abides in Christ, and draws his life from Christ, as a branch from the vine, may surely expect to have a Christlike love, a Christlike patience, a Christlike meekness, a Christlike compassion, and a Christlike delight in all the will of God. As a branch of the true vine, he will assuredly resemble Christ.

THE BRANCH MUST FEED ON THE VINE

The more we feed on Christ the more of his character we possess. The branch feeds upon the vine always. In a sense, and an important sense, we must likewise feed on Christ, for so he has said, "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And again, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." - John 6:51, 57.

Surely the branch no more feeds upon the vine, than does the believer on Christ. And how may we feed upon Christ? We feed upon him in our faith appropriation of his redemptive work on our behalf. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," and we feast upon him as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The great doctrines of the cross of Christ are food to the Christian alive to spiritual things. In the cross of Christ he glories. To the cross he clings, and to its foot he yearns to bring all who need its saving power. We feed upon Christ as we ponder over and personally assimilate his words of life. And in this we may properly include all Scripture. The doctrines and the promises alike of God's Word cheer and strengthen the Christian's heart. Did David not have this in mind when he said, "O how love I thy law: it is my meditation all the day." And had not the poet been feeding on Christ in this way when he wrote for saints to sing:

How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said?
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

Have not saints throughout the Age, when their faith needed to be nourished and strengthened, turned away from men, and found cheer and comfort, and faith to endure, in the Savior's own words. Over and over again no voice but his could comfort, none other could say, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." And as the spirit has brought to remembrance whatsoever things he hath spoken, the green pastures and quiet waters have brought peace and joy.

We feed upon Christ at the throne of heavenly grace. Through him alone we have access to God, therefore in our prayer life we are but appropriating the things freely given us by God through Christ. And what a feast this is! When we come thus, ransomed by his precious blood, we come into communion with God our Father, and with Jesus our beloved Head, and there we rise above the world into the realm of that which is pure and holy, and there hold converse with Father and Son in intimate fellowship. In this way we draw from the true Vine spiritual food for our spiritual life. And what blessings attend the faithful use of this means of appropriating strength from the vine. Well has the poet said:

"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.
In every case should Christians pray
If near the fount of grace they'd live.

"Depend on Him; thou canst not fail;
But ask according to His will;
Then always shall thy prayer prevail,
And nothing shall to thee work ill."

When we take into our hands the emblems of a suffering Savior, Gethsemane and Calvary are brought again to view. The compassion of our dying Lord is then well calculated to excite our love and gratitude, and to awaken in our hearts resolutions to live a life wholly dedicated to him who loved us so. That scene of agony which bought us from death, and opened up to us such inestimable privileges as our "great salvation" makes possible to us in this day of exceptional grace, surely must bestir us to an overwhelming gratitude, and cause us to cry out, "I will take the cup of salvation" and henceforth live wholly for him who loved me so. Let him impart to me his "life more abundant."

Surely in all these things we feed upon Christ. And as we thus feed upon him, we partake more and more of his nature, reflect more and more of his image, and thus manifest to others more and more of his likeness.

WHAT HAVE YEARS OF CONTACT WITH JESUS PRODUCED

How important, then, is the question, How much of the character of Christ do we really possess? - especially if we have enjoyed years of this close relationship to Christ, having, as we have surely had, this privilege of drawing life and vitality from the inexhaustible Vine. How *very* much of likeness we ought now to bear to the Vine of which we have been the branches these many years. Certainly we ought to possess unmistakable likeness to Christ now, if the relationship has been all that it should have been.

If some one should give us a branch taken from a grapevine and ask us from what it had been taken, we would have no difficulty in deciding whence it came. There would be the leaves, the wood, and the fruit, all of which would remind us at once of the vine on which it grew. So the life and character of the Christian should remind others of Christ. If we desire to draw others to him, we must show them the attractions of Christ. As his followers we should become more and more partakers of his nature or character and thus show that we have been with him and learned of him. Our own sinful nature must be repressed, and the character of Christ increasingly exhibited in our lives. Being the professed people of God, we can in this way show to others something of the love and beauty of our adorable Redeemer.

By abiding in Christ, and drawing from him large supplies of spiritual life, we will increase in those graces of which he is the source, increase in our resemblance of him, will exhibit more of his character, and thus verify his own precious word of promise, "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

- J. J. Blackburn

"Dwelling With the Rose"

"A Persian fable says: One day
A wanderer found a lump of clay
So redolent of sweet perfume
Its odors scented all the room.
'What art thou?' was his quick demand
'Art thou some gem from Samarcand,
Or spikenard in this rude disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?'
'Nay: I am but a lump of clay.'

""Then whence this wondrous perfume-say!"
'Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.'
Sweet parable! and will not those
Who love to dwell with Sharon's Rose,
Distil sweet odors all around,
Though low and mean themselves are found?
Dear Lord, abide with us that we
May draw our perfume fresh from Thee."

The Question Box

*"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;
but gather the wheat into my barn." - Matthew 13:30.*

Question:

What is the significance of the word "first" in this text?

Answer:

The English word "first" correctly translates the Greek word *proton*. Apparently not first in importance, but *first in time* is to be understood.

The sequence of events contemplated is generally held to be:

First, gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them;
Second, gather the wheat into my barn.

Sometimes a variation of this sequence is understood, which may be expressed as follows:

First, gather the tares and bind them in bundles, with a view to their subsequent burning;
Second, gather the wheat into my barn.

This sequence, however, with or without the variation indicated, *is not found in the text*. This may surprise many, but it is nevertheless the case. That this may be the more dearly seen, let us compare with it the language employed in another Scripture in which events *are* stated to occur *in sequence*, namely, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Here, after saying that "the dead in Christ shall rise *first*" (same Greek word *proton* as in Matthew 13:30) the Apostle goes on to say: "*then*" (Greek *epeita*, meaning "thereafter") "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . ." Here sequence is clearly stated; *first*, *this* is to take place; *thereafter*, *that* will occur.

Returning now to Matthew 13:30, we look in vain for any word meaning "then" or "thereafter" or "afterwards" or "secondly." Instead, what do we find? We find an altogether different word -- the word "but" (Greek *de*). This word is frequently used, as here, adversatively. It has nothing to do with sequence, but merely indicates, for the wheat, an opposite destiny from that indicated for the tares.

This same adversative use of "but" may be seen in Matthew 3:12, where John the Baptist is discussing the harvest of the Jewish Age. Of Jesus, the Baptist there says: "He will gather his wheat into the garner; *but* he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Here, again, there is no question of sequence; the point being established is that the wheat and the chaff have opposite destinies.

In the parable of the tares, since there is no such word as "afterwards" or "thereafter," the sequence of events must be determined from the context. Here, of course, one must proceed with great caution. Yet I submit that it does no violence to the text, and the householder's words *may* be properly understood, by the following: "*First* gather the tares; *then* bind them in bundles, with a view to their subsequent burning. The wheat, of course, goes to my barn."

As a matter of fact, in regard to the wheat, it would hardly be necessary for the householder to issue any instructions. Even an inexperienced farmhand might be supposed to know what was to

be done with *it*. Certainly this must be supposed of competent reapers who had arrived to engage in their accustomed task. The disciples, too, must be presumed to have known the destiny of the wheat. At least, they asked the Master no questions about *it*. What *they* wanted explained, was the meaning of the darnel, which the enemy had sown and which, they were shortly to learn by bitter experience, the enemy in real life *was even then sowing*. So far as the wheat was concerned, they knew that *it* was to be gathered into the householder's barn; there was no question in their minds as to *that*.

Corroborating this thought (that the idea of sequence -- first tares then wheat -- is to be excluded from our interpretation) is the use of the word "gather" (Greek *sullego*). This word is used, in Matt. 13:30, not of the wheat* but of the tares. However, in the parable of the drag-net it is used of the good fish, not of the bad. (Matt. 13:48.) This is noteworthy. It is the *tares* that are *gathered out* in the one parable. Why, then, are not the *bad* fish *gathered* out in the other? To correspond, to teach the identical lesson, and particularly if that lesson had been the lesson of sequence, it would seem that not the good fish but the bad, should have been gathered out. But the parable does not so express the matter. What is the obvious conclusion? Evidently the conclusion must be that no lesson of sequence is intended, for, if there were, the sequence taught in the one parable would be reversed by the other!

* The second occurrence of "gather" in Matt. 13:30 (where it applies to the wheat) comes from a different Greek word.

With the question of sequence, then, excluded, while we may not yet fully understand all the lessons our Lord has for us in these parables, their important, underlying lessons clearly emerge:

I. Good and bad people are to be permitted to become inextricably mixed in the Church throughout the Gospel Age.

II. Their separation, nevertheless, at the end of the Age, is certain to take place.

III. This separation is illustrated by two parables: (1) Tares, (2) Drag-net:

(1) The work of gathering and bundling the tares (with a view to their subsequent burning) does not precede, neither does it follow, the work of gathering the wheat into the heavenly garner. Both works progress at the same time, that is to say, *during the same period of time*, namely, the harvest of the Gospel Age.

(2) The work of gathering the good fish into vessels, likewise, does not precede, neither does it follow, the work of casting the bad away.

Both take place at the same time, that is to say, *during the same period of time*, namely, the closing period of the Gospel Age.

- P. L. Read

Recently Deceased

Sr. Ruth E. Abrahams, Chicago, Ill. - (July)
Sr. Lillian M. Arner, Easton, Pa. - (July)
Sr. L. W. Brown, Washington, D. C. - (July)
Sr. Bush, Anerley, London, Eng. - (June)
Bro. Coote, Southampton, Eng. - (June)
Bro. William Crawford, Ilford, Eng. - (July)
Bro. J. J. Jennings, Sacramento, Cal - (July)
Bro. C. W. McCoy, Spokane, Wash. - (May)
Sr. G. Reece, Montreal, Que. - (March)
Sr. J. Skelly, Rutherford, N. J. - (July)
Bro. C. W. Snyder, Allentown, Pa. - (July)
Sr. Irene Sovereign, Martinez, Cal. - (June)
Bro. P. F. Tunke, Woodbury, Conn. - (Aug.'56)
Sr. Anna Wazeneger, Pittsburgh, Pa. - (July)
Bro. H. E. Whitcomb, Chicago, Ill. - (July)