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A Meditation for Whitsuntide

"The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." - Gal. 5:22.

DURING THE closing days of our Lord's earthly life He gave His disciples assurance that after His departure they would not be left desolate. "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, . . . the spirit of truth, which . . . abides with you, and will be in you." - John 14:16, 17, Diaglott.

This gracious promise was confirmed to them during the forty days in which He was seen of them after His passion. "John, indeed, immersed in water, but you *will* be immersed in Holy Spirit, after a few days. - Acts 1:5, Diaglott.

For the fulfillment of this promise they were to "wait" at Jerusalem. "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8.) They had not long to wait. When ten days had passed-as soon as "the day of Pentecost had fully come," the promise of the Father was fulfilled. - Acts 2:1.

ISRAEL'S SEVEN FEASTS

The Feast of Pentecost was one of the seven "feasts" or "appointed seasons"-, or "holy convocations" of Israel, all of which occurred in the first seven months of their ecclesiastical year. (Lev. 23:4, margin.) First came the Feast of Passover, on Nisan 14. Next came the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days. On the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 16, the Feast of Omer, or presentation to Jehovah of the Sheaf of First-fruits, took place. Fifty days thereafter came Pentecost, the very word "pentecost" meaning fifty. The remaining three festivals were all appointed for the seventh month, and were, respectively, those of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

WAITING FOR THE PROMISE

Elsewhere* we have considered in some detail the typical significance of Pentecost. Here we content ourselves with observing that Pentecost had long pointed to the time when, in the Father's great plan of redemption, the offering of the Church as "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" would be made and God's acceptance thereof manifested. (James 1:18; Rev. 14:4.)

* "Herald" June, 1955.

And now that time had come, and to these early followers of the Master was to be given the privilege of representing the whole Church in its anointing experience. The antitypical Passover Lamb (Christ Jesus) had been sacrificed; the true Feast of Unleavened Bread could now be kept. Already Christ Jesus, as prefigured in the Omer Sheaf, had been "raised from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20.) They had conversed with Him during the space of forty days following His resurrection and had watched Him ascend to heaven. (Acts 1:3, 9.) What yet remained ere they, too, though in lesser measure, would be endued with that, "power from on high" which had possessed Him *so* completely and had operated *in* Him so mightily? What must have been their thoughts and emotions, as in obedience to His word they had waited at Jerusalem? This we can only surmise. Their days and evenings, we know, had been passed in "the" upper room in which they had last communed with Him. (Acts 1:13.) Certain it is that such a company of sincere-hearted ones, meeting together thus, with "one accord," could not but have been blessed. (Acts 2:1.) By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving they had sought to prepare themselves to receive the "promise." (Acts 1:14.) First, perhaps, they would earnestly plead for its fulfillment. Next, perhaps, they would recall some of the Master's teachings, the grace of His countenance, His habit of thanks at meal-times. Doubtless there would come at times a keen sense of shame and regret at some of their own past conduct. Following quickly upon this mood would come the happy memory of His grace in forgiving, and they would be relieved of their compunctions. Then, perhaps, would follow a sense of feebleness, of utter helplessness without the Lord-as sheep, indeed, without a Shepherd. (Zech. 13:7.) As day after day followed without event or sign, perhaps they would give way to a sense of disappointment at God's delay; possibly, (since they were men and women of like passions and frailties with us) to a feeling of doubt that the promise would ever be fulfilled. Shame at their doubt and disappointment would follow, and then a willingness to wait God's own time and to accept God's own way. Perhaps, as God's time drew near, there may have arisen in the hearts of some of them the thought: "The Feast of Pentecost draws near; can it be that the Father will fulfill His promise then?"

THE SPIRIT DISPENSATION

The day came at last; they *were* as earthen vessels cleansed by prayer, emptied and waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit, when "suddenly" it came. just as at His baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus, so now it descended upon all them that were His, and they were all filled with it. - Acts 2:1-4.

In the case of our Lord the descent of the Spirit upon Him was manifested by an outward sign. To the Baptist it seemed "like a dove" (note: not a dove, but the appearance of one). (John 1:32-34.) So also, at Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit on the waiting Church was accompanied by outward manifestations. A sound like a rushing mighty wind filled the place where they were sitting (note: not a wind, but a sound like wind). Tongues, not of fire, but "like as of fire" sat upon them. Evidently these manifestations, as also the "gift of tongues" (which seems to have been bestowed on the whole company) were for signs. The appearance of a dove on the occasion of our Lord's baptism gave the Baptist the confirmation he needed in identifying and heralding Jesus as the long-promised Messiah. The "sound," the "tongues of fire," and the gift of "speaking with

tongues," likewise served to call the attention of all to the great change of dispensation then being inaugurated. Doubtless, too, when at the close of the seventy weeks of Jewish special favor (three and a half years after Pentecost) the Holy Spirit was poured out on Cornelius and his associates, some similar gift was granted them as a sign, an evidence, that Gentiles, too, were now to be privileged to share in the high calling of God extended to consecrated believers of every nation during this Gospel Age. - Dan. 9:25-27; Acts 10:45-48; 11:15-17; 15:8, 9.

How eminently suitable these signs were for the purposes intended! The dove, the emblem of peace and purity, fitly represented the fulness of Jehovah's spirit of love in Jesus; as the tongues of fire, fitly represented the mission of the Apostles to be, under the Holy Spirit, that of testifying as "witnesses."

Nor was the "gift of tongues" without its special meaning. It may well be understood as a sign, we think, that the confusions of Babel are to be reduced to order; that the separations induced by the various languages of men are to be healed, as gradually men are drawn, some in the Gospel Age and others in the Millennial Age, into the Kingdom and fellowship of Christ. On the plain of Shinar, thinking to raise themselves above the reach of divine judgment, to build a tower which no flood could drown, men had been smitten with a divine judgment; their one language was - broken into many dialects; they were divided and scattered over the whole earth. This curse is to be conquered by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost, which Spirit is yet to be poured out on all flesh. In the perfection of the Kingdom none is to be unintelligible to his brother, or separated from him; the whole earth- is to be of one mind and heart. - Zeph. 3:9; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16.

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues" "the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:11.) Ah! gracious omen! when will it be wholly fulfilled? For let us not forget that just as the Omer presented on the morrow after the Passover, setting forth' Christ Jesus as "the first-fruits of them that slept" was a pledge and earnest of the two loaves presented on Pentecost, which prefigured the Church in its elective character as the first-fruits from among men, so also the second first-fruits are themselves a prophecy and a pledge of the fuller harvest yet to be gathered in the coming Age, of which, in the Scriptures, all God's holy Prophets have spoken since the world began. - Acts 3:19.

Thank God, though this glorious vision *tarry*, it will come; it will not fail of fulfillment. (Hab. 2:3.) True -- we must "wait out" *this* promise of the Father; but we may wait in the strength and patience of hope. For, just as that little company in Jerusalem chanted in many tongues the wonderful works of God, so in the end, the whole world, with its myriad tongues, will, when the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh, sing and give praise for the redemption God has wrought through Christ.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Meantime, while waiting the Lord's time and way, we are not to be idle, but to occupy ourselves with those things which pertain to life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3.) Our chief occupation is to be the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit. Valuable though they were, the miraculous gifts vouchsafed to the early Church were but transient. The gift of tongues, along with the rest, was destined to pass away, as St. Paul plainly indicates. (1 Cor. 13:9.) Even when bestowed, it needed to be supplemented by another gift, that of "interpretation" before it could be exercised with profit and to edification. In discussing this gift of tongues, St. Paul affirms that many could speak in a tongue who could not interpret, and declares that for himself he would rather speak five words with the understanding than ten thousand words in a tongue. Its chief importance, lie says, was as

a sign, "not to them that believe but to them that believe not." The brethren were not to despise any of these miraculously bestowed gifts; on the contrary they were to esteem them. Nevertheless there was a more excellent way--expounded by St. Paul in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians -- the way of love.

Love (as the Apostle observes, in the text quoted at the head of this article), with its component elements, is the fruit of the Spirit. While doubtless the gift of God, its very nature precluded the possibility of its being miraculously bestowed; in every case it must be developed personally by the individual who would possess it. Moreover this gift, unlike those miraculously bestowed, is not destined to pass away. It is to abide. (John 14:16; 15:10; 1 Cor. 13:8, 13.) We may, therefore, well esteem it to be "in ore excellent" and earnestly cultivate it in our hearts and lives.

"FRUIT" NOT "FRUITS"

How shall we do this? The Apostle points the way in our text. (Gal. 5:22.) There he enumerates nine elements of the fruit of the Spirit, namely "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness,* meekness, self-restraint."

* That the Revised Version "faithfulness" rather than "faith" is to be Preferred here is clear, we think, from the context, where relative duties rather than faith in its theological sense are plainly in evidence. Compare also Titus 2:10.

It is to be noted that the Apostle speaks not of "fruits" (plural) but of "fruit" (singular), thus drawing our attention to the fact that the nine graces mentioned (the list is not exhaustive) are not to be separately cultivated, "love" in one Christian, "joy" in another, etc., but that all are to be developed together in the character of each consecrated follower of the Master. We may compare this passage with the Beatitudes (Matt. 5) where our Lord (in declaring the blessedness of those who are poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers) is surely not describing various persons, but one person, namely- His truly consecrated follower, from many points of view.

We may also compare the well-known passage, 2 Pet. 1:5-8, where the one who "has obtained precious faith" is exhorted to give all diligence to furnish in his faith fortitude, and in his fortitude knowledge, etc., etc., and thus to develop, not a one-sided, but a well-balanced Christian character.

(To be concluded in next issue untr title "The Fruit of the Spirit")

- P. L. Read

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Christ's Knowledge of Our Heart Sincerity

"Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love thee." - John 21:17.

THE sweetest and most inspiring thought that a Christian can hold in his heart as he faces life's responsibilities is that God knows the sincerity of his heart devotions. To be able to look up into the face of God and confess amid all the fluctuating experiences of one's life, "Thou knowest that I love thee," is to know a refuge and a place of rest for every glad and every troubled hour in life. It is a precious thing to remember in hours of vigorous and prosperous spiritual life, that God knows the sincerity of our love for him; for do we not feel at such times a sense of utter inability to express the depth of love that abides in our hearts for him. But particularly precious is this assurance that he knoweth all things concerning our affection for him, when we have wretchedly failed to demonstrate that degree of love by some sad mistake in word or act. It is then that this refuge seems most wonderfully sweet. At times when we seem lifted up into some fresh vision of the greatness of God's love to us, and we try with our feeble words to express our joy and gratitude, how often we have found "this poor lispings, stammering tongue" just falling back on these words coined by such a heart long ago, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." But when we have fallen in some crisis hour, and failed to attain a victory we had so confidently expected to have to our credit, and after trying to express some self justifications, and to make some apologies for our failure, being painfully humiliated because we stumbled so -- ah then, how our heart has fled to this refuge as its final source of comfort: "Thou knowest that I love thee."

It is the blessed inheritance of every loving Christian heart to claim this refuge, and to realize that in it he possesses this last and this greatest haven of love, this final court of appeal -- God's knowledge of the sincerity of our hearts. What a boon it is! As we attempt to live out our consecrated lives today, endeavoring to express our devotion to God as best we can, most of us encounter plenty of that foretold opposition promised all faithful believers. How often we would be crushed under it if we did not remember that God knows all about us.

Many elements enter into the experiences of God's people in days like these. All about us we may see the fulfillments of prophecy pointing out these last days as a time of special trial for the saints of God. From all three quarters, the world, the flesh, and the devil, influences are emanating which might well discourage even the most valiant heart, and would do so if it did not find faith strengthened by the assurance that God knows, and loves, and cares. But among the peculiar and particularly severe testings of this present hour, there is a prevailing sentiment -- a skepticism or doubting of the personal sincerity of others. We live in a world in which distrust, and the spirit of competition is rife, and these very influences all around us, seemingly in the very air, are sure to "try all them that dwell on the face of the earth," including the professed people of God. The spirit in the world is today a spirit of alertness, ready at an instant to spring into life and ripen rapidly into suspicion. To be on guard against others becomes in time so fixed a habit that the love which "thinketh no evil," and which "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," ceases to be manifested in circles where above all others it should abound. Under such circumstances what a refuge tried and afflicted hearts may find in the confidence that they can come into the presence of him who knows all things, and say to him, "Thou *knowest* that I love thee."

OFTENTIMES MISREPRESENTING OURSELVES

It cannot be denied that we are sometimes our own worst enemy. By a decidedly wrong course persisted in we become a worse enemy to ourselves than any other could be. But it often happens that while earnestly desiring to bring all our ways into full accord with the will of God, our lives come far short of expressing "the beauties of true holiness," and we are conscious of the fact. At such times what consolation there is for the conscientious heart in the assurance that God knows how much we wanted to "live and speak and act aright," and how deeply we feel the sense of humiliating failure.

In the effort to live our lives in the midst of present conditions, to bear unmoved the unfavorable judgments, which in some measure perhaps we have bought upon- ourselves, we meet the difficulty of trying to make our true self known to others. There are many difficulties encountered in having our motives properly interpreted. Motives we have examined as in the presence of God, may seem questionable in the eyes of others because they judge by outward appearances. And many times we know they would find motives better than they thought they would, if they only understood. There are many tangled threads in every life, inevitably so because all are imperfect. "Mending and patchwork combined" would describe the kind of showing most of us make; and keenly conscious of how unprofitable we are, and knowing that it is only through his abounding mercy that we are permitted to go on seeking to prove our love to him, how ready we are to ask of him,

"Dear Lord, take up my tangled threads,
Where I have wrought in vain,
That by the skill of Thy dear hands
Some beauty may remain.

"Take all the failures, each mistake
Of our poor human ways,
Then, Savior, for Thine own dear sake,
Make them show forth Thy praise."

And so it happens that we as often misrepresent ourselves as others misrepresent us. Our own missteps, our own blemishes, help to make our lives an enigma to others. The realization of this fact may at times bring us a bitterness of spirit, or discouragement, because we have so wanted to live out in daily life the impress of the Spirit's inworking of the character of Christ. The sting of this bitter disappointment is in the knowledge we have of ourselves, that we are discrediting the deeper self which, beneath these failures and seeming inconsistencies, is after all our true self. We know that when, through all the faults and deficiencies we have to confess, Christ's pointed question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" comes to us and seems to search our heart to its depths, there is that confidence within which answers back, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

How blessed to realize in such an hour that we still have left this last and greatest refuge of love, this assurance of his knowledge of our sincerity. Whatever our own poor faulty words and ways may seem to say to others, and whatever the verdict of others may be concerning us, and whatever our own memory may hold up before us of mistake and failure, we can still look up to Christ and say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And who that really appreciates this refuge for himself, can fail to be inspired with the determination to let such love mellow, purify, strengthen, and fill his heart to overflowing with a glad conformity to the wish and prayer of Jesus-that we should love and sympathize with one another even as he has

continued to love and fully sympathize with us, loving us in spite of all our lamented imperfections.

LOVEST THOU ME MORE THAN THESE?

The text we are considering here brings before our mind that memorable day when Jesus propounded his heart searching question to Peter. Thrice had Peter denied his association with Jesus, and thrice he is asked to affirm his love for him. And we may be sure this record has not been preserved all these years just to tell us of the over-confidence and subsequent fall of this Apostle. It is all too often a portrait of our own self-assurance, our own claims to love him better, and of being more loyal to him than are others. It is therefore full of needed lessons and warnings; yes, and comforting encouragements also to any who make Peter's mistake and need the same very searching but loving question brought home to them, "Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter had confidently affirmed that though all should forsake Jesus, yet he would even die with him unafraid. By inference at least he was rating himself much more faithful to Jesus than any of his fellow disciples. But to Jesus how clear it was that Satan specially desired to sift Peter out of the ranks altogether, and this boastful superiority complex expressed so boldly in Peter's claim revealed how unaware he was of the dangers besetting him. How much he needed the warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

"So Simon Peter stood before his risen Lord; and thrice that awful inquisition tore its way, like a relentless search-light, through the shadows and failures of his life: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' What could he say? Could he appeal to his record, and offer it in evidence as a demonstration of his love? Ah! should he try to speak of this, the memory of his own failures would choke him, the stains of his record would silence him. For he has as his portion a full share of the bitter memories of an undisciplined character; immature professions of fidelity, neutralized over and over again by unbalanced words, by jealous, presumptuous, unspiritual deeds; and upon him is even now the fresh blight of that immeasurable error when, unmanned by excitement, his very life, as he stood in the high priest's palace, had seemed to break up under him, as the ice breaks up in the spring freshet, and, heedless of consequences, lost to honor, he had repudiated his Master in the open presence of men.

"Yes, what could he say, as the searchlight of the Savior's inquisition ploughs its way through the shadows of his life: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' Could he appeal to his companions to speak for him, and testify on his behalf? Had they not known all the weakness of the undisciplined past, the lapse from faith when called by Jesus to walk on the water of the sea of Galilee; the jealous contention over who should be the greatest; the presumptuous, unseemly rebuke spoken to Jesus just before the Last Supper; the drowsy failure in Gethsemane, when the one request of the agonizing Jesus went unheeded, and sleep destroyed the vigil of sympathy for which Christ longed? Had they not known the story of the last desertion-its desperate, threefold insistence, its cowardice, its profanity? How then could he ask them to testify, when so much in the open story of his life spoke against his love for Jesus?

"Yet, in the face of these memories of an undisciplined character which forbade the appeal to his record and the appeal to his friends, this man has still a refuge, for he is a lover of Christ. The Savior's question does not convict this man of insincerity, however it may convict him of inconsistency and pierce him with penitence. 'Lovest thou me?' The words, in themselves so gentle, are keen as a surgeon's knife, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, laying bare the thoughts and intents of the heart; but, like the surgeon's knife upon the living subject, the pain they cause shows there is life and not death. 'Lovest thou me?' It is an appeal, not to his record, but to himself; not to his witnesses, but to himself; and the

appeal is answered in the depths of the man's self-consciousness. He cannot deny his record; there it stands, fraught with inconsistencies, failures, weaknesses. He cannot, it may be, overcome the prejudice in the minds of others which these inconsistencies, failures, weaknesses may have excited against him; but in those depths of self-consciousness, where he knows himself as no fellow-man can know him, there is that which meets the question of Jesus, 'Lovest thou me?' with an unfaltering 'Yes.'

"But how shall he substantiate and prove that love? He cannot prove it from his record, blemished and discolored with many a failure; he cannot prove it from the vouchers of his friends, for they know too well how again and again he has been weighed in the balance of trial and found wanting. He cannot prove it by plaintive attempts to apologize for or to minimize past failures. An intuition tells him that were to weaken, not to strengthen his case. But, on the other hand, he cannot deny himself; he cannot discredit his own self-consciousness. In his self-consciousness he knows that he loves Christ. And to prove that love he has still one refuge, one appeal left -- the appeal to him before whom he now stands face to face, and from whom has come the question,

'Lovest thou me more than these?' So his love leaps to its heroic ultimatum, and discarding arguments, apologies, and refuges of words, appeals to him 'to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid'; 'Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,' "

THY GENTLENESS HATH MADE ME GREAT

How much would have been lost to us if this experience of Peter had never been written. If we are willing to just substitute our own name for that of Peter in this story of vaunted loyalty and regrettable breach of faith, we will surely feel a greatly increased sense of gratitude to God for the gentleness with which he has disciplined us, and feel also a greater sympathy for others who may stumble in the way. Remembering the look that brought Peter to a realization of his failure, and that evidently saved him from Satan's clutch, and remembering that such tenderness on the part of Jesus has been our salvation in times of terrible deflections, surely we will find it in our hearts to emulate him in our attitude toward fellow runners in the race, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Each heart knows its own bitterness. Hidden away from the sight of others there are the fiercest struggles being waged in many a life. Beneath a surface of what may indeed appear the most circumspect conduct there may be for aught we know, the deepest realization that "in my flesh dwelleth no perfect thing." The life in which love for Christ is a sentiment so deep it cannot explain itself in words, is the life that most clearly recognizes how it has tried the patience of Christ by the shortcomings written into every day's record. When he should have found strength, there has often been a new revelation of weakness, and denial when he should have had a brave and loving evidence of fidelity. But over all the long years of such incompleteness, Jesus has gone on spreading the covering of his forgiving love. Through the marvel of his forgiveness of our sins, through his patience, through the sorrow we ought to see oftentimes on his face as he turns and looks upon us, when in the moment of weakness we have denied him, he knits our affections closer to himself. And, though we still are failing and faltering, he makes us conscious of a deepening love for him that answers to his love for us, and finding this love for him as the deepest and truest part of our nature, he accepts as profoundly true our heartfelt affirmation, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

"His loving-kindness O how great!" Who can fail to marvel over the greatness of God's loving-kindness over years of stumbling and failures, such as every humbled heart freely confesses. And

meditating on that loving tenderness as experienced by us, is surely calculated to make us loving and tender-hearted in our attitude toward all God's children. In fact, the real test of our appreciation of the mercy we have had extended toward us, lies in our spontaneous exercise of this virtue where its need is greatest. To whomsoever much has been forgiven, the same loveth much, is a beautiful truth. It means that the one who is most conscious of being in special need of forgiveness, will never fail to let the Lord know his depth of gratitude; and neither will the life fail to reveal in loving-kindness to others the touch of divine compassion. Deeds are much more expressive than words. If we rejoice in the compassion, the patience, the understanding love of Jesus as he helps us along so that our faith fail not when Satan well-nigh claims us, it is well that we tell him that he knows how fervently we love him. But there is still another answer he will look for, and an answer that must be just as readily given him. He is still saying to us, "Go thou and do likewise." "I have given you an example to follow, I want you to love others as I have loved you, to forgive as I have forgiven your imperfections, and to patiently bear with one another as I have borne patiently with you."

And how can we best do this? Perhaps in no better way than to just remember that the same warfare, the same sense of defeat, the same inward joy in having a refuge in the heart of Jesus' love, stirs within our brother's breast, and without which he would sink down into utter discouragement and despair. Let us believe that he too is trying faithfully to live at his very best, and perhaps is grieved deeply over the fact that successes and failures alternate so swiftly in his warfare. He too may be appearing at his worst, and be going out to weep bitterly over another inexcusable blunder, when he had wanted so much to live and speak and act aright. He too may be realizing that somehow his life and movements seem often stumbling against the ideas and ways of others, and he would give much to have it ordered. otherwise. Can we fail to rejoice with such an one, when, with an abiding confidence in God's knowledge of his sincerity, he turns his face upward to one who never, never misunderstands or judges unjustly, and confesses to him: "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

Ah yes! Jesus knows the glorious ideals we fain would attain. He accepts the heavenward prayers which our wearied spirits breathe out to him under the pressure of daily trials such as are common to all his saints. He knows us not only as we are, but as we mean to be. And so to ourselves, and no less to our brother, there comes such a volume of comfort in the assurance we both have of God's knowledge of our sincerity. Precious knowledge! for how could any of us entertain any degree of assurance of being numbered among the Elect Bride of Christ, if our hearts were not fully known and lovingly interpreted by him who weighs our pure sincerity over against the frailties we lament? Let us then excel in reflecting the love of God as we journey on together, my brother and I, until we enter the happy abode awaiting those whose sincerity God has known to mean perfect love for him, and love for their neighbor as for themselves. Let us then remember --

"They are such dear, familiar feet that go
Along the path with ours -- feet fast or slow
And trying to keep pace -- if they mistake,
Or tread upon some flower that we would take
Upon our breast, or bruise some reed
Or crush poor Hope until it bleed,
We may be mute,
Not turning quickly to impute
Grave fault; for they and we
Have such a little way to go -- can be
Together such a little while along the way
We will be patient while we may."

- J. J. Blackburn

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

Nos. 32

Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be propitiatory, through faith, in His blood, to show His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season; that He might be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." -- Rom. 3:25,26 [R. V. (margin)]

IN THIS half hour we continue our study of these two most instructive and devotion producing verses. In our last Meditation we noted that on the one condition of faith Gods free gift of righteousness, both imputed and imparted, was made possible by the atonement sacrifice of Christ. Here this at-one-ment sacrifice is shown to have both an *immediate* and an *ultimate* object.

The Immediate Object of Christs Atonement Sacrifice

When God set forth or established beforehand Christ Jesus to be propitiatory by his blood through faith, his *immediate* object, the Apostle here informs us, *we to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime*. The meaning of this statement is obscured in the *Authorized Version* where it is rendered "for the *remission* of sins that are past."

Scholars tell us that the word is not *aphesis* (remission) but *paresis* (passing over or praetermission). As one of them remarks: "The sins of former times were neither forgiven nor punished; they were simply passed over; and for this reason there was need for a vindication of the righteousness of God. . . . This signal manifestation of Gods righteousness (in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood) was vouchsafed, not because the sins of the past were *forgiven*, but because they were only *overlooked for the time being without being forgiven* It was because the sins had been passed over and had not been forgiven that the exhibition of Gods righteousness . . . was necessary."

A somewhat related expression appears in Acts 14:16, where Paul speaks of the living God, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways"; and again in Acts 17:30, where the Apostle tells us that "The times of ignorance God *winked at*" (*overlooked, R. V.*). In the words of another: "For four thousand years the spectacle presented by man king to the whole moral universe was, so to speak, a continual scandal. With the exception of some great examples of judgments, Divine righteousness seemed to be asleep; one might even have asked if it existed. Men sinned here below and yet they lived. They sinned on and yet reached in safety a hoary old age! Where were the *wages of sin*? It was this relative impunity which rendered a solemn manifestation of righteousness necessary."

To Declare His Righteousness

Obviously the word "righteousness" in this passage denotes not a gift from God to man but an attribute of God himself, an attribute which, long veiled, was put in the light of day by the death of Jesus. By Gods righteousness we understand the Apostle to mean here Gods retributive justice -- that "mode of action whereby he maintains the *right* of every being, and consequently *order* throughout the whole universe, blessing him who has respect to this order, visiting with punishment him who violates it." Now "the attribute of *righteousness*, eternally latent in holiness, *passed into the active state* with the first appearance of the *free* creature. For in the fact of freedom there was included the *possibility* of disorder, and this possibility soon passed into

reality. Gods horror at evil (his holiness) thus displays itself in the form of righteousness preserving order and maintaining right.

Now to maintain order without suppressing liberty there is but one means and that is punishment.

Punishment is order in disorder. It is the revelation of disorder to the sinners conscience by means of suffering. It is consequently, or at least may be, the point of departure for the re establishment of order, of the normal relation of free beings." Now in the passage under consideration the Apostle is explaining that "God judged it necessary, on account of the impunity so long enjoyed by those myriads of sinners who succeeded one another on the earth, at length to manifest his righteousness by a striking act; and he did so by realizing in the death of Jesus the punishment which each of those sinners would have deserved to undergo."

How Did the Sacrifice of Jesus Manifest Gods Righteousness?

But it may be asked: In what sense can the death of Jesus be said to manifest or demonstrate the righteousness of God? Moreover they are not always railing infidels but frequently sincere Christians who are puzzled on this question. Surely, the latter reason, our sense of right and wrong (our conscience) is from God; how then, in all good conscience we ask are we to understand as righteous something which seems to offend our sense of right? How can the punishment of the innocent in the stead of the guilty be considered a righteous act, much less serve to vindicate God in his failure to adequately punish sins committed throughout the previous forty centuries? Do we not have here in a matter of tremendous importance an instance of that injustice (we speak as men) which in smaller matters would at once provoke our indignation?

It is not sufficient to reply to such honest inquirers with "Your doubts and questionings of this central theme of the Scriptures border on blasphemy!" Such puzzled ones may have as deep a reference for God and as great a longing after righteousness as those who hide their own lack of understanding by such unenlightening response. Their doubts and questionings are not against Gods righteousness, in which they have every confidence, but their conscience rebels at the false reasoning and philosophy which for centuries has permeated and falsified the true teaching concerning the ransom sacrifice of Christ. The idea of injustice has been introduced into the doctrine of the Atonement, and it is this that has occasioned their difficulty.

There is a story told that when Edward VI was a young prince and deserved for his misdeeds to be punished another boy was taken and whipped in his stead. He was guilty of idleness; another was required to suffer the consequences. He neglected his tasks; another was chastised. He played the truant; another was required to smart for it. Christian teachers have taken this monstrously unjust transaction as an illustration of the Atonement; it is truly an illustration of the Atonement as they misconceived it. But the misconception is gratuitous; there is no real resemblance in the case presented. The case is most decidedly not in point. Since the story has been told so often, it might be well to make it in point and consider whether it presents itself in any aspect so monstrous and absurd. To make it in point, the parts played in the story by the young prince and the other boy must first be reversed. The young prince suffers for his humbler truant companions, not one of them for him.

He does it of his own free will, not of constraint or compulsion. Only such an act as this would overcome their perversity, their wrong mindedness and conduct.

Moreover he offers himself to this chastisement knowing that nothing else would overcome it and knowing, blessed be God, *that this would be effectual to do so*. What is represented to us in the

New Testament is not that Jesus Christ, an innocent person, was punished without reference to his own will by a God who thus showed himself indifferent as to whom he punished so long as some one suffered. But Jesus, being one in purpose and spirit with the Father, being indeed the worthy Son of such a Father and in harmony with the Fathers heart of love, *of his own will* became man and suffered what the sin of the world laid upon him to lift the world out of sin.

The Principle of Vicarious Sacrifice Not Unjust

"Vicarious suffering: It is strange to hear the mighty uproar made about it when indeed in lower forms -- not low in themselves though low as compared with the highest -- it is everywhere, where love is at all. For indeed is not this -- one freely taking on himself the consequences of others faults and thus averting from those at least in part the penalties of the same, building what others have thrown down, gathering what others have scattered, bearing the burdens which others have wrapped together, healing the wounds which others have inflicted, paying for things which he never took, smarting for sins which he never committed -- is not this, I say, the law and condition of all highest nobleness in the world? Is it not that which God is continually demanding of his elect. They approving themselves his elect as they do not shrink from this demand, as they freely own themselves debtors of love to the last penny of the requirements which it makes? And if these things are so, shall we question the right of God himself to display this nobleness which he demands of his creatures? Shall we wish to rob him of the opportunity or think to honor him who is highest love by denying him the right to display it?"

Which Do You Seek: Righteousness or Exemption from Punishment?

"To a Jew, and to almost all races when St. Paul wrote, the idea of an expiatory sacrifice for sin seemed natural and obvious. But for the special Christian doctrine of expiation the basis is to be found in the memorable chapter 53 of Isaiah. That great Prophet of the captivity is assuring Israel of their restoration to their own land. This restoration is to follow on the due punishment of her sins: She hath received of the Lords hand double for all her sins. And the restored people is to be, before all else, a righteous people -- all righteous -- a people of Gods favor because they are living according to God. But there is so much sin still remaining in them as to make it necessary that *the new life of the recovered people should be based on a great act of propitiation*. The Righteous Servant. . . . offers his life a willing sacrifice for their sins. The chastisement of their iniquities falls on him; he accepts the burden and is obedient unto death. Dying he makes his soul a guilt offering; living through death exalted and powerful, he becomes an intercessor accepted with God, the head of a new seed whom he justifies before God by the intimate knowledge of Gods mind and character which in his voluntary humiliation he has won. This wonderful prophetic picture represents a vast advance in moral teaching on what had gone before. It is not only that the self sacrifice of a perfect human will is substituted for the animal victims, to which the enlightened conscience of Gods people already refused to allow any real efficacy, but also that the idea of propitiation is put in a context where it is made plain that it can be only *the prelude to a state of actual righteousness* in those who are to be justified by it. It occurs as part of the answer to the question. Not How is Israel to escape punishment? but How is Israel to become the really righteous nation, living in the likeness of God? . . ."

All conceptions of propitiation may be distinguished into true or false according as righteousness or exemption from punishment is the end which is specially in view.

The Immoral Notion of Caiaphas

"Thus when we pass on into the New Testament we find in Caiaphas saying, It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not, the typical expression of the quite immoral notion* of the forcible sacrifice of an innocent person in order to exempt a guilty race from punishment. In our Lords teaching, on the other hand, we find the doctrine of atonement raised to its highest moral power. As the Forerunner had revived the teaching of Isaiah by pointing to him as the Lamb of God who taketh away (i. e. taketh up and expiateth) the sin of the world, so Christ himself spoke of the covenant which he came to inaugurate, as to be based upon the sacrificial offering of his body and the outpouring of his blood; spoke also of the remission of sins as the benefit to be expected from his expiation." The ransom sacrifice of Christ, his "sacrifice of propitiation to which we contribute nothing, and in which we do not share, remains a necessary prelude to the establishment of the new life.

*None the less immoral as Caiaphas intended it, because, as St. John perceives, a Divine truth uttered itself though his lips (John 11:51).

It is in virtue of this that we are justified and accepted and allowed to start afresh." "But no teacher in the world ever made it so plain that God can be satisfied with nothing that any other can do for us- -with nothing but actual likeness to him in ourselves.

No teacher ever made it so plain that what we are to desire is not to be let off punishment but to be actually freed from sin. He left no room for doubting that only by following his steps, even to the cross, and surrender of our lives can we share his fellowship."

- P. L. Read

The Song of Songs

A short series of devotional meditations - No. 3

"My beloved is mine and I am His." - Song of Solomon 2:16.

OUR previous meditation ended with the Shulammitte's response to Solomon's ardent proposal of marriage. In the immortal words of Song of Solomon 4:16, she declared her readiness to undergo any experience which would make her worthy of him.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
Blow upon my garden,
That the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden, And eat his pleasant fruits."

These words, spoken in all sincerity by the Shulammitte, have fittingly expressed the heart sentiment of the Church-espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2.) And our Lord's response has been the same as that of Solomon -- Song of Solomon 5:1:

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride:
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk."

THE BRIDE'S TROUBLED DREAM

With verse 2 of chapter 5 (Song of Solomon 5:2) another lyric idyl begins. The Bride is to be seen here talking, sleepily, to herself:

"I was asleep, but my heart waked."

Her dream is an unhappy one. In it she hears her beloved, knocking at her door for admittance. However, instead of arising promptly to greet him, she lingers over her toilet, and the adjusting of her dress. By the time she opens the door to let him in, he has gone. - Song of Solomon 5:6.

Dismayed, she wanders forth to find him, but finds only the night-watchmen, who beat and insult her.

"The watchmen that go about the city found me,
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me."

Next she finds herself, in her dream, talking to the bridesmaids about her lover. To their inquiry: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" she responds instantly, extolling his praises in a galaxy of superlatives:

"My beloved is white and ruddy;
The chiefest among ten thousand...
His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh. . . .
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely."

- Song of Solomon 5:10-14.

This likening of his lips to lilies compares the contour and color of his mouth to the texture of the red lily of Palestine, dropping the sweet nectar so diligently sought by the honey bee. These rich and beautiful flowers growing so abundantly upon the slopes of that historic land earned for it the description of "a land flowing with honey."

APPLICATION TO OUR LORD

The words which fell from the lips of Jesus were words of life. They were healthy, gracious words; sweet, wonderful words; words of comfort, hope, healing, kindness, and authority. All who heard him witnessed to their wonder and beauty. He spoke as never man yet spake. He taught as one having authority. His words bubbled like living water from the fount of his own goodness and purity. They were the overflow of a nature uncorrupted by the taint of this world's sins. They sprang from a heart touched with compassion for the sorrows and struggles of mankind. Mercy mingled with truth, and every utterance was rich with heavenly wisdom, with the revelation of a Father unknown as yet and of a kingdom of love and good will beyond the conception of fallen humanity.

To all who have believed on him, his words have been most precious. Not only have they delighted to meditate upon them, to con them over and over, but they have rejoiced to tell them to others, to point them out as drops of sweetness and sustenance, making wise the simple, and refreshing the weary and the burdened.

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." (Song of Solomon 1:2.) The Bride desires his expressions of personal love, and scattered throughout the sacred Scriptures are just such expressions; words of tender affection placed there and preserved for the individual encouragement, joy, and inspiration of those who should become the friends and disciples of the Lord Jesus, espoused to him by consecration vows and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

HIS COUNTENANCE IS AS LEBANON

Lebanon is one of the celebrated mountains of Palestine. It was famous for its rugged heights, its mighty cedars, the richness and fertility of its wide, lower slopes, its abundant cornfields, its olive-grounds and vineyards. It is here employed in the picturesque metaphor of the East to illustrate or express the kingly dignity and beauty of the Bridegroom.

In this rapturous description of his charms, the Bride's dream ceases to be troublesome. It ends in a spirit of happy confidence, which finds expression in a refrain of triumph:

*"I am my beloved's,
And my beloved is mine."*

THE KING'S MEDITATION ON HIS BRIDE

Beginning with verse 4 of chapter 6 (Song of Solomon 6:4), the King is seen, meditating on his bride.

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, . . . Turn away thine eyes from me, For they have overcome me."

These words express, not only the thoughts of Solomon concerning the Shulammitte, but those of our Lord concerning his Church. Yes-her sincere avowals of loyal, whole-hearted affection touch him deeply. Her singleness of purpose ("This one thing I do") -- her forgetting the things of the past, and pressing toward the mark for the prize; the counting of all things as loss and as being of no value, on the part of the prospective members of his Bride, if only they might know him and the power of his resurrection; the patient, determined fight against personal weakness, against evil within and without; the constant seeking of his glory in faithful service of the Gospel of salvation; the glad spending of life for his sake; the laying in the dust of all most dear to the natural man, that Jesus may be the richest treasure, the dearest love, the noblest cause, the divinest inspiration; all this single-minded devotion openly glowing in their lives stirs his own love to exquisite depths of yearning and tenderness. Almost it seems more delight than can be borne with restraint, and the lover asks that the love-light in her eyes be veiled-turned away a while longer.

The King's meditation next becomes a reminiscence of their first meeting, and he is reminded of the astonishment of his courtiers, when they caught sight of her.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon, pure as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?"

These words draw attention to a striking or arresting form of beauty. The words imply that the Bride is possessed of a queenly dignity, a demeanor and carriage of an amazing kind. She has a brightness and beautiful serenity of face which cannot be lightly looked upon. She cannot be treated with familiarity by the throng. Her attitude compels respect. It conveys a sense of authority, even the power to rebuke, to compel, and set in order.

To his Church our Lord said, "Ye are the light of the world, the salt of the earth."

He expected this light to shine in the dark places of the earth, not merely upon unbelief but upon tyranny, corruption, intolerance, and every form of evil. As the salt preserves, so her goodness, arising from her beliefs, her faith, and her earnest endeavor to stem the tide of human weakness, was to act as a preservative of human goodness, to save the race, during her own time of test and trial, from complete dissolution by its own hates and vices.

Few have been these saints of God down the ages -- a mere handful drawn from the masses of mankind, mostly poor and despised; yet what would the world have been without their lofty thoughts and ideals of mercy, justice, and love; without their noble words defending the weak, upholding the cause of the poor and oppressed; their very spirit breathing peace and hope upon the discords and despair of human struggle; their pure hearts wordlessly rebuking the perversities of a crooked world?

As the pure air comes down from the mountains, dispersing the stagnation of poisonous and pestilential vapors, so the energizing spirit of Christ, as it has worked in and through his people, has been a wholesome, compelling force in human affairs for nineteen and a half centuries.

Individually the Bride class, conscious of the dignity of their calling as ambassadors for Christ, having had committed to them the work of reconciliation, have endeavored, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk worthily, to reflect the characteristics of their Lord and Head, to be wholesome in word and conduct. Their example has constituted a silent reproof to the foolish and the wayward, an inspiration to many others to forsake the toys and trivialities, the vanities and vexations of this transitory life, and apply time and thought to the pursuit of more worthwhile objects.

"Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners," the true followers of Jesus still press on their way, renewing their strength, mounting on untiring wing into the rarefied atmosphere of fellowship with God, imparting to the mundane affairs of life a glow of gladness and enthusiasm, and to their daily contacts a radiance brought from that holy walk which warms and lights the lot of those groping for life in this shadow-land of confusion and death.

THE SHULAMMITE'S SURPRISE

In Song of Solomon 6:11-12 the King recalls how surprised she herself was, on first meeting him:

"Or ever I was aware, my soul set me Among the chariots of my princely people."

Then, in Song of Solomon 6:13, he remembers the cry of the members of his court:

"Return, return, O Shulammitte;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee."

He recalls, too, the state of confusion which overcame her as the result of all this sudden, quite unexpected, attention:

"Why will ye look upon the Shulammitte,
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?"

In Song of Solomon 7 the king's meditation on her matchless beauty is resumed. It will be recalled that, in Song of Solomon 5:10-14, the Bride, in her dream, presented an enchanting word-picture of her Bridegroom. Here, in chapter 7, he returns the compliment.

In his reminiscence of her he recalls

"Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple;
The king is held captive in the tresses thereof."

Carmel has always been a notable mountain and considered sacred from earliest times. Of soft white limestone, veined with flint, it stands out a shimmering, solitary ridge, the waters of the blue Mediterranean washing almost to its feet. Its more delicate, striking loveliness, rising high and singly from the surrounding south, well illustrates the fineness and excellence of the power of God in the Church when she is brought at last into the beauty of the Temple of God, filled with his spirit, a royal priesthood, the anointed Bride in close union with her glorious Head, the Lord Christ Jesus, fitted for eternal ministries.

"Thine eyes [are] as the pools in Heshbon."

Earlier in these meditations, the king had likened the eyes of his Bride to those of a dove -- innocent, meek, loving. (Song of Solomon 1:15; Song of Solomon 4:1.) Indeed, the Bride is herself called a dove. (Song of Solomon 2:14; Song of Solomon 6:9.) Here her eyes being likened to "the pools in Heshbon," adds a further thought -- that of depth.

As applied to the Church, these similes may well be understood as suggesting deep spiritual perception, such, for instance, as was exemplified by Mary's insight, when she anointed Jesus against his burial. - John 12:1-9.

At the close of this, our fifth lyric idyl, comes the refrain, similar in sentiment to that which came at the end of the previous idyl:

*"I am my beloved's,
And his desire is toward me."*

- F. A. Shuttleworth, Scot.

Things Prepared

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." - 1 Corinthians 2:9

IT WOULD seem a hopeless task that we have set for ourselves -- to get a vision of the things that have never been seen or even heard about, the things that we would not understand if we did hear about them or see them. The following verse, however, gives us courage, for it assures us, "God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." Or is it God's wisdom, verse 7, that is revealed to us, as the margin of the *American Revision* indicates may be the meaning. "Unto us God revealed *it* by his spirit." Not to man is the revelation made, but unto the "new creature in Christ Jesus." Paul's use of this very text, for some of us, illustrates how impossible it is for man unaided to grasp the things of the spirit, for they understand he is quoting Isaiah 64:4. No human mind would have gleaned from it such a thought. The verse reads: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Without the guidance of the spirit, its inspiration would have been eternally lost.

Perhaps there is no better method of deciding the nature of the things prepared for us than to review for a few moments the things that have come into our lives since we consecrated our all to the Lord. If the first thought is, "Oh, if I had dreamed how great the trials would be through which I was to pass, I am sure I would never have had the courage to make a consecration," perhaps the flesh is not quite dead yet. If the fleshly mind were completely gotten rid of, would not the first thought be of the blessings that have come out of those trials? After being stoned at Lystra, and left for dead, Paul departed for a time to Derbe, but returned with the message for the brethren at Lystra: "Through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God." A fleshly mind would have brooded over the intensity of his sufferings and the injustice of the treatment he had received, until there would be little else of which he could talk.

At no time does inspiration hint of our arriving at the condition where unpleasant experiences will of themselves become enjoyable. Instead we are assured that "Discipline always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are *trained by* it reap the fruit of it afterwards" (Heb. 12:11, *Moffatt*). It is impossible for one who does not fully appreciate *the kind of fruit* thus developed, to accept the Apostle's advice and "rejoice *in* tribulation." But after a few experiences with tribulation, *properly profited by*, one can by faith accept each new one as further evidence of the Father's love. To complain is to say, "I wish he did not love me so." To rejoice is to acknowledge our needs and the wisdom of his dealings. The after-fruitage the trials yield is too precious to forego just to save the flesh a little discomfort.

Instead of murmuring because of our testings, we should rather be concerned that we who have so much to be corrected should have so little evidence of corrective providences. "Suffering produces fortitude; fortitude, ripeness of character; and ripeness of character, hope; and . . . this hope never disappoints because God's love for us floods our hearts through the holy spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5, *Weymouth and Young's Literal Translation*). No wonder Paul begins this passage, "We *exult* in our sufferings." The Arnold-Ford Commentary testifies on the basis of Paul's statement: "We not only rejoice in hope of future good, but we also rejoice or make our boast in present troubles; not merely *in the midst* of them, and *in spite* of them, but actually *in* them, or *on account* of them, as the context implies; and this is in accordance both with Scripture precept and with recorded Christian experience."

BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR FATHER

The following well illustrates the Christian's growth in the supreme kind of knowledge. A lad is taking his first walk with his father. Since they lived on the edge of a village, their stroll led into the nearby pastures. They soon came to a little stream, a mere trickle, but an insurmountable obstacle to the young mind that had never seen such a thing before. Without the father's hand that grasped his, he would never have attempted it. But what a thrill it was to find himself safely on the other side. Soon they came to one two feet wide. Surely no one could get over that! But how easily his wonderful father lifted him over it. The next one, four feet wide-well of course even his father could not get over that, he thought. But he found himself clasped to his father's breast, and with one jump they were safely on the other side-and he was beginning to understand what a wonderful father he had. Finally they came to one twice as wide.. No father in all this world could pass over that big thing, he thought. But even here the father had a way that fitted the need. He took the little fellow on his back and had him clasp his arms about his neck, and then, leaping from stone to stone, soon set the little one down on the other side, to look up into his face with the assurance that there was not another father in all this world like his. He could not have found that out if there had been no rivers to cross. So also in the Christian life. Though one by one our experiences have become more severe, with each, our comprehension of the Father's love and wisdom and power has grown. Who could regret the experience that teaches so much?

Those walking the way of consecration find it so narrow that the only safety is in keeping in the middle; and for each traveler there is just room enough for "My Lord and I." When we entered on this journey, we were weak in faith, and it was hard to realize always the presence of this unseen Traveler. Graciously, therefore, the Lord provided the comfort of brethren to walk with us, some ahead and some behind; but brethren we could see; not brethren to lean upon, however. Our Lord is by our side for that purpose.

Those who walk this way do not always find it easy to get along amicably with their companions; in fact could, and often do, make suggestions of more stringent limitations to the One who "hath set the members in the Body as it hath pleased him." How long-suffering he is that he permits our

meddling in things that are strictly in his own power. There is a duty devolving on every member of the Body. It is not that of choosing who shall walk with him, but instead, that of accepting all whom the Lord invites to that privilege. Then, having graciously accepted them, "let us consider one another to provoke," not by arguments on our differences, but "to love and good works. In spite of all our best efforts, we find some of them hard to get along with peaceably; but, the Apostle continues, leaving no opening for the flesh: "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." The verse that follows makes one's heart ache for those who invent excuses for limiting their fellowships -it is a warning of the second death, and evidently for those who perpetrate this very crime against the One who planned that fellowship (Heb. 10:24-27).

ARE WE IN DANGER OF STILL ANOTHER SIN OF PRESUMPTION?

With our hand placed confidently in that of our faithful Father, life can include a long series of conquests, many rivers successfully crossed. But may not this lead to overconfidence, to the attempting of some river too big for us? Fortunately we have an inspired answer to that, telling us exactly how big that last river may safely be. "Strengthened with *all* might," is the assurance of Colossians 1:11. Brother Paul, do you mean all there is in the world? He knew we would have difficulty in accepting a promise so sweeping as this one, so he continues -- to make the matter absolutely clear: "Strengthened with all might, *according to his glorious power*"; literally, "the power of his glory." Is not that the purpose of all the experiences of the Christian life, in part at least, that we may begin to comprehend how glorious he is and that that knowledge may become a sustaining power, a never-failing inspiration in our lives? The answer then is that when we come to that biggest river, that hardest experience, we need to ask ourselves only, "Could my heavenly Father cross that?" If he can, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power (according to the power of his glory), we are safe to press on; and it will be to victory if we look to him instead of at the waters crossed.

As one wonders if he might be risking too much on the assurance of just one' text, not one, but many texts come to mind: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" and such like (Deut. 33:25; Ps. 27:1). There are many weak and trembling travelers of the narrow way, since "not many mighty" have been called, and we hear these say: "Those promises will work for those who are not as weak as I am." For all these our thoughtful heavenly Father has provided assurance suitable only for those who have discovered that they are weak and who are humble enough to "lean not to their own understanding"; "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength comes to perfection where there is weakness" (2 Cor. 19:9, *Berkeley Version*). Could one believe this truly and not have peace? - "the peace of God"? The Greek language, like others, except our own, has no apostrophe "s" ('s), so its possessive is expressed by the preposition "of." The Moffatt translation is therefore justified in its rendering of this verse. Those who have the faith to accept it must confess, "God has revealed it unto us by his spirit." Only those who have experienced this peace can testify as to the quality of the peace he gives. Moffatt reads: "Never be anxious, but always make your requests known to God in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; so shall *God's peace*, that surpasses all our dreams [lit. thought], keep guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7).

Our precious Redeemer, in leaving his disciples, knew how; great would be the dangers besetting the Christian, how the weakness of the flesh would make it the easy victim of Satan's attacks if the heart were not garrisoned by his peace. Included in his parting gift, therefore, was this gem: "Peace I leave with you." But could he leave it? Might not that intimate they already had it? They could answer, "Yes, we have peace. Food and clothing, even taxes have been provided, and our Teacher has been able to answer every argument the opposers have raised. Remember the 5,000

fed, the fish with the coin in its mouth, the doctors of the law confused in our Master's presence. Who would not have peace under such care? But this does not complete the Master's promise: "Peace I leave with you; *my peace I give unto you*. Was the Lord making a mistake giving peace to those who already had it? No, it is not the peace of having something to eat and wear, of having taxes paid. It is *his* peace, the peace of sonship, the peace they were soon to experience for the first time. Until begotten to sonship they could not know "God's peace." This peace is the heritage of those "begotten again to a living hope, . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-5, *Young's Literal Translation*).

No man of the world can be rich enough not to prefer such treasures to his own -if he could but have the faith to believe the promise. This is not the only thing that is already ours. All things are ours. No wonder the Apostle instructs us not to "glory in men," since all things are ours. Croesus nor Midas, nor anyone else, nor all combined could add anything to our wealth. They might add to our tribulation, might even take from us our peace, but they would have nothing to add to our blessedness. Nor would the heart of faith have even a faint desire for them to attempt it; for, already, "all things are ours" by faith.

THE MOST REMARKABLE OF ALL INHERITANCES

But we have not waited to hear the Apostle to the end of his statement of our wealth. Continuing, he names some of these things: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." "Cephas"! that is one of Peter's names. This means that Paul and Peter are both ours, not to be apportioned one here and one there, one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles - both are ours whether we be Jew or Gentile. No one can take them from us. We are very thankful for that because of the valuable truths each has taught us. But why is Apollos in the list? He made some mistakes in doctrine; and, he did not write a word to leave for us to study. Ah, he was a member of the Body of Christ, necessary, therefore, that it might be "harmoniously fitted together and closely united by every contributing ligament, with proportionate power for *each single part* to effect the development of the Body for its upbuilding in love" (Eph. 4:16, *Berkeley Version*). Perhaps, too, he is included so that we will remember that every saint down through the Age that we can contact may lend us some assistance in our supreme *need-more of the-spirit of the Lord*. These saints of the dark ages perhaps cannot help us in doctrines, but they and Apollos were "in Christ Jesus," and so they partook of his spirit and thus can function for us in "the development of the Body for its upbuilding in love." To forget what is the real purpose of the Christian life -- development into Christ's likeness - is to risk the loss of the precious heritage of their saintly lives.

Not yet have we heard Paul's list to the end. The next in the list is "the world"-the "kosmos," this present evil order of things, with its corrupt governments, deceitful advertising of grasping, unscrupulous organizations. Do we desire that thing in our list? Perhaps we would never find a place in the completed Body if we did not learn patience with unrighteousness in high places, learn not to "speak evil" of dignitaries. Could the Lord have provided anything that would have furnished a more searching test of our faith than this, that these were "ordained of God," and that it is his will that we should be in subjection to the powers that be (Rom. 13:1; Titus 3: 1) ? Not this world alone, but the world to come is also ours, for the next thing in the list is "life." Except as sin shall again bring its wages upon one, that life is eternal.

Brother Paul, we cannot ask for more; we could not have dreamed that this much could be ours. But, "wait a minute," our brother says, "I have one more thing for you. All things are yours, God-given teachers, the world, and life-and *death*." "What! that horrible thing! Why, Paul, we do not want that. Give that to our enemies." "Oh, you do not understand," he says. "I have put that in as

the very climax of your blessings. If *faithful unto death* you will receive the *crown of life*-the very highest form of life the Father has to give. If you are dead with our Lord, you will reign with him, crowned for the most glorious of kingships, that reigning of righteousness that will teach righteousness, obedience to all the willing, and thus give life to all that under your guidance go to the very end of the highway of holiness. To leave death out of your list would be to leave out joint-heirship, would be to fail of being of the Seed of Abraham for the blessing of all the families of the earth." "Ye, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." But he was only a type, and not in every detail, for there will be no angel hand to stay the knife if we go as willingly as he to the altar of sacrifice. How much easier, however, the Lord has made it for us, in that we "die daily." For many this is the precious daily privilege of serving the brethren, laying down their lives for those that are nearest and dearest to them, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Truly, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Depressions, wars, governments, radio, television, printing presses, all are ours, but they are the property not of the flesh but of the new creature, to be used for the development of the new creature; and, apparently from the way they often work, we may assume that what we are most in need of is patience, charity, and such like. It is much easier to develop a "holier than thou" attitude than to develop charity; a reformer complex, instead of patience. It is ours neither to fight each other or the world, but to "fight the good fight of faith" and find "henceforth laid up" for us the "crown of righteousness" that is "for all those that love his appearing." The marginal reading of Isaiah 8:20 seems to indicate that those who have so little reverence for the inspired Word that they would be willing to change this verse, 2 Timothy 4:8, to make it shut out of the Kingdom some who evidently have just as consuming a "love for his *appearing*" as they, have not themselves made even a good start toward getting the light that Word is intended to shed. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no morning in them." "Blessed is he who patiently endures trials; for when he has stood the test, he will gain the victor's crown the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him." - James 1:12, *Weymouth*.

One whose heart is opened to receive without reservation or alteration every revelation of the Father's love, instead of closing the eyes, opens wide the eye of faith and trains it to see into the far distances of "ages to come," and sees there God's hand still working to "show the *exceeding* riches of his grace in his kindness toward us"-the children of Abraham who "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering," though all fleshly tongues strive unceasingly to change every promise into something weak faith can grasp.

One cannot wonder that the Apostle Paul, with his vision of the things God hath prepared for them that love him, should with one word dismiss all earthly things, counting them but loss, vile refuse, for the supreme excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:7-11.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

- P. E. Thomson.

Israel Marks Tenth Anniversary

WHEN nationhood was proclaimed by David Ben Gurion, the first and present Premier, the country had 650,000 Jewish inhabitants. It was immediately confronted by an Arab invasion, which Jewish troops defeated despite towering odds. Now the Israeli population has boomed, through immigration, to almost 2,000,000 souls, including 214,000 Arabs.

The face of the land has been changed -by tilling, irrigation, and intense work -from barren vistas to teeming productivity. Israeli have built 500 new farming settlements and scores of mining settlements. It has a system of free, up-to-date schools, fine public buildings, libraries, art museums, and scientific institutes. Remarkable progress has been made in medical care. Its areas are traversed by new railroads and highways; new shipping centers are rising and extensive industrial campuses.

- *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*

DEVELOPING THE LAND THE 10-YEAR STORY

(as reported by *Mordecai Bentov*, Minister of Development)

In Biblical times Israel was known as the "Land of milk and honey," the land where field crops and livestock flourished in abundance. Centuries of neglect resulted in erosion, and the once fertile areas became denuded. It was only 50 years ago, with their commencement of Jewish settlement, that the northern half of Israel was reclaimed and once again justified its Biblical description.

The southern half of the country, however, comprising more than 50 per cent of Israel's present-day area, consists of desert terrain. Unless and until new methods of agriculture are developed, and until the day when peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors permits the channeling of life-bringing waters from the Jordan River Valley to the arid wastes of the Negev desert, this area will remain unfit for cultivation.

Yet much of Israel's hope for her future economic development is centered on this region. . . . The Old Testament makes little mention of its hidden wealth-yet a score of valuable minerals exist in the area, many of them discovered only recently. Quantitatively most impressive are the deposits of phosphate, one of the basic fertilizer materials.

One of Israel's principal advantages in this field stems from her geographical position. Not only does Israel have ports both on the Mediterranean and on the Red Sea (giving her direct access to the fertilizer-starved: countries), but she is the only country between the Dead Sea area and Japan possessing all three basic raw materials for fertilizer production-phosphates, oil, and potash. These vital materials-the pillars of modern agriculture-offer the best hope to the over populated areas of Asia of increasing the yield of their lands. These countries are only beginning to realize the advantages of modern fertilizer application, and Israel will be the nearest source of supply for these needed materials... .

About to go into production in the "Deep South," i.e., in the Eilat area near the Red Sea, are King Solomon's copper mines. Located some five miles from the site where King Solomon smelted copper three thousand years ago (with huge slag heaps till today testifying to the ingenuity of the famous king), the new mines are to produce 7,000 tons of cement copper annually.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Ten years ago we were privileged to see the renewal of the Jewish State which is called Israel.

The State did not come into existence on that great day of May 14, 1948, nor was it the 650,000 Jews who lived in the country on that day who established it. Pioneering activities of three generations preceded the declaration of independence, beginning in 1878 when the first Hebrew settlement in the country, Petach Tikvah, was founded.

These projects strengthened Jewish agriculture, industry, building, culture, language, self-defense, education, and science. The community which arose in Israel before the State was different in its socio-economic structure and in its cultural-spiritual configuration from any other Jewish community in the world. The imprint of Hebrew independence was stamped on all its deeds, but these would not have taken place when they did if the Jewish people had not nurtured throughout generations the dream of Messianic redemption, the vision of salvation and independence which was implanted in it by its prophets and sages from ancient Biblical times.

Hard and bitter were the pangs of Hebrew redemption at the start. Immediately after the declaration of our independence, war was declared upon us by all the Arab states, and although the United Nations General Assembly, led by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, decided by a more than two-thirds vote on the establishment of the State, the United Nations did not lift a finger when Arab States, members of the United Nations, attacked Israel in order to annihilate her. One loyal ally arose -the Jewish people in the Diaspora. Volunteers from more than sixty countries came to Israel to participate in the War of Independence, and the help given by the Jewish people to Israel in its defensive war continued to grow, as young conquering Israel began its great and difficult task of gathering in the exiles and making the desert bloom. More than one million Jews were added to the country since the establishment of the State. Whole exiled communities were brought over to Israel, and from seventy-nine countries in all parts of the world Jews streamed and are continuing to stream to their ancient homeland. Tribes of various tongues, separated by time and space, distant by hundreds of years and thousands of miles, are mixed in Israel into one nation that once again speaks its Hebrew tongue, that is becoming rooted anew in the soil of its homeland, and is creating by its physical labor, and through its spiritual, moral and intellectual ability an economy and a culture and a society and a science, which will be a glory to Jewry wherever it may be.

We know that our work is not finished, and will not be finished easily or quickly, and it is possible that there await us difficulties and dangers no less great than those we overcame in our first decade, but we look to the future with confidence in the Rock of Israel, depending on the justice and purity of our cause, and hoping for the good-will of all nations who seek peace and justice and freedom.

- David Ben Gurion

Recently Deceased

Bro. W. J. Cook, New Brighton, Pa. - (1957)

Sr. Anna Fetzger, Sarasota, Fla. - (Apr.)

Bro. A. H. Klepinger, Peru, Ind. - (Apr.)

Sr. F. N. Pease, Inglewood, Cal. - (Mar.)