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Glory to God in the Highest

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:11.

FOUR MILLENNIUMS had passed by since that tragic day when, through the disobedience of one, sin had entered to mar God's perfect creation. Four millenniums, which had seen the blight of ever-increasing sin and degradation take their toll in the sufferings of humanity. Four thousand years of woe-sickness, pain, death. The night of weeping ever darker, -the future ever more hopeless. A spectacle, surely, to awaken the pity and compassion of the heavenly hosts, who from the beginning had been observers of the sad plight of the children of Adam. What a dreadful torrent of evil had been unloosed by that one act of selfwill, and how oft must it have been regretted. But no way of repentance, though sought with tears, could revoke the inexorable decree: "Dying, thou shalt die." The downward course of man continued with increasing tempo as age followed age, generation succeeding generation, "born but to die," till any ray of hope which may have resided in the human breast must have been well-nigh extinguished. Man himself was helpless, unable to give a ransom for his brother, and heaven seemed not to heed.

"Long Lay the World in Sin and Error Pining"

But indeed, was heaven heedless? Was there no ray of sunshine to rift the clouds of darkness for the groaning creation? Ah yes, and therein lies the story, the sweetest story, which shall never grow old though oft we hear it. It is the story of divine love, the story of Jesus, the gift of God to reveal that love for the world. For God had not forsaken His creation, and His ears were open to their cry. Yes, He had in all ages revealed glimpses of His purpose for humanity, though often in dark sayings and mysterious rites. For beginning with the words spoken in Eden, the so called Proto-evangelism which foretold the Seed, and continuing through the promises to Abraham and the succeeding patriarchs, and through Moses, David, and the prophets -- we can trace the word of hope which kindled the spark of faith to await the Promised One. And there were not wanting those who had clung to these precious rays of divine hope and who waited for the "consolation of Israel." To Israel, awaiting their restoration and future preeminent glory at Messiah's advent, this was the promise unto which, in their "instant service night and day, the twelve tribes hoped to come. To this "sure word of prophecy," they would "take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," until the day should dawn, and the day-star arise in their hearts. And this Messianic

hope gave meaning to their worship, filled them with patience in suffering, kept them separate from the nations around, and ever fixed their hearts and thoughts upon Him who was to come. And now the signs of His advent were discernible, and at any moment there might burst upon them the gladsome tidings that He had appeared. With what earnest longing, with what eagerness of gaze did they await the dawn of the long-expected day; and lo, it is at hand, and the first step in preparation for Him is about to take place.

Zacharias, the Under-Priest

It was the time of the morning sacrifice. Within the courts of the great temple all had long been busy. Priests and Levites hastened about their duties, and as the massive temple-gates slowly swung on their hinges, a threefold blast from the silver trumpets of the priests seemed to awaken the Holy City in a summons which could not leave unmoved patriot, saint, or stranger. It was scarcely daybreak, but already the preparations for the offering of the lamb were ended. And now it was brought forth, to once again make sure of its fitness for sacrifice, to water it from a golden bowl, and then to lay it in mystic fashion (as tradition described the binding of Isaac) on the north side of the altar with its face to the west.

In the words of Edersheim: "All, priests and laity, were present as the priest, standing on the east side of the altar, from a golden bowl sprinkled with sacrificial blood two sides of the altar, below the red line which marked the difference between ordinary sacrifices and those that were to be wholly consumed. While the sacrifice was prepared for the altar, the priests whose lot it was, had made ready all within the Holy Place, where the most solemn part of the day's service was to take place -that of offering the incense. And now the lot was cast to indicate him who was to be honored with this highest mediatorial-act. Only once in a lifetime might any enjoy that privilege. Henceforth he was called 'rich,' and must leave to his brethren the hope of the distinction which had been granted him. It was fitting that, as the custom was, such lot should be preceded by prayer and confession of their faith [the so-called Shema, consisting of Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41] on the part of the assembled priests."

In the group, ranged that autumn morning around the superintending priest, was one of "the course of Abia," on whom the snows of at least sixty winters had fallen. But never during these many years had he been honored with the office of incensing-and it was perhaps well he should have learned that this distinction came directly from God. In many respects he seemed different from those around. His home was not in the great centers but in a small town in the uplands, south of Jerusalem. He was of the humbler class of the priesthood, but yet possessed the twofold honor of being married to the daughter of a priest. Zacharias and Elisabeth, his wife, were truly "righteous" in the sense of walking, so far as man could judge, "blamelessly," alike in those commandments which were specially binding on Israel, and in those statutes that were of universal bearing on mankind. Elisabeth was childless. For many a year this must have been the burden of Zacharias' prayer; the burden also of reproach, which Elisabeth seemed always to carry with her. They had waited together these many years, till in the evening of life the flower of hope had closed its fragrant cup; and still the two sat together in the twilight, content to wait in loneliness, till night would close around them.

And now, on this day, the lot for the daily incense offering had fallen on Zacharias. In his white sacerdotal robes he entered the Holy Place that the clouds of the incense, which symbolized Israel's prayers, might herald the way for the smoke of the victim presently to be burned in their stead. And as he pours the incense on the flames, as the intercessor for his people, he too joins his supplications. We need not question what the burden of that prayer must have been with one who, like him, "waited for the consolation of Israel," and "looked for redemption." It was, doubtless, that the sins of the nation, his own sins, and the sins of his household might be forgiven; that Jehovah would accept the atonement of the lamb presently to burn on the great altar in their stead; and that the long expected Hope of Israel, the Messiah foretold by prophets, might soon appear.

Zacharias' Prayer Answered

And as he prays, on the right side of the altar there appears what he could not but recognize as an angelic form. Never, indeed, had even tradition reported such a vision to an ordinary priest in the act of incensing. No wonder, then, that Zacharias "was troubled, and fear fell on him," as suddenly he beheld what afterwards he knew to be the Angel Gabriel ("the might of God").

Gabriel had come on a mission befitting the world from which he had been sent. The hour had arrived when the prayer which Zacharias and those like him had so long raised, should be heard. The Messiah was about to be revealed, and the faithful priest who had so longed for His appearing would be honored by a relationship to Him. He had for many a year desired a son; not only would his wish be granted at last, but the son to be born would be the prophet, long announced, to go before the Expected One to prepare His way. He need not fear: he who speaks is Gabriel, the archangel, who stands in the presence of God, and as one who always beholds the face of the great Father in heaven, he has a tender love to His children on earth.

But the heart is slow to receive the access of any sudden joy and to lay aside disappointment. The thought rises in the heart of Zacharias that the glad tidings of the birth of the Messiah may well be true; but, as to the son promised to his wife, stricken in years as she now is, can it be possible? A sudden dumbness, imposed at the angel's word, at once rebukes his doubt and confirms his faith.

From the Temple to Nazareth!

It seems most fitting indeed that the evangelic story should have taken its beginning within the sanctuary, and at the time of sacrifice. But now we pass from the forerunner to the Messiah, from the temple to Galilee, from the priest to the humble, unlettered family of Nazareth. While Zacharias and Elisabeth were rejoicing at their promised blessing in their quiet home in the south, there lived in the village of Nazareth, over a hundred miles to the north of them, a Jew of the name of Joseph, and a simple maiden named Mary who was betrothed to him as his future wife. It was now the sixth month from the appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias, and Mary's time of betrothal was passing quickly away in her family home. The future herald had been pointed out, and now the advent of the Messiah Himself was to be announced as silently and with as little notice from men.

In the words of Edersheim: "Five months of Elisabeth's sacred retirement had passed, when a strange messenger brought its first tidings to her kinswoman in far-off Galilee. It was not in the solemn grandeur of the temple, between the golden altar of incense and the seven-branched candlestick, that the Angel Gabriel now appeared, but in the privacy of a humble home in Nazareth. The greatest honor bestowed on man was to come amidst circumstances of deepest human lowliness, as if the more clearly to mark the exclusively divine character of what was to happen. And, although the awe of the Supernatural must unconsciously have fallen upon her, it was not so much the sudden appearance of the mysterious stranger in her retirement that startled the maiden, as the words of his greeting, implying unthought blessing. The 'Peace to thee' was, indeed, the well known salutation, while the words 'The Lord is with thee' might waken the remembrance of the angelic call to great deliverance in the past. But this designation of 'highly favored' came upon her with bewildering surprise, perhaps not so much from its contrast to the humbleness of her estate, as from the self-unconscious humility of her heart. And it was intended so, for of all feelings this would now most become her. Accordingly, it is this story of special 'favor,' or grace, which the angel traces in rapid outline, from the conception of the virgin-mother to the distinctive, divinely-given name, symbolic of the meaning of His coming; His absolute

greatness; His acknowledgement as the Son of God; and the fulfillment in Him of the great Davidic hope, with its never-ceasing royalty, and its never-ending boundless Kingdom."

It would have been no more than human weakness if doubts had risen at such an announcement; but these the angel sets to rest, if they were springing, by telling her that a miracle, no less wonderful than that which would happen with herself, had already been wrought upon her relative Elisabeth. Mary's answer is the ideal of dignified humility, and meek and reverent innocence: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And presently she was alone. Blessed Mary, favored of God. If she had but known the deeper meaning of the name Jesus, which, like an unopened bud, enclosed the flower of His passion, that was mercifully yet the unthought of secret of that sword which should pierce the soul of the Virgin Mother, and which only His future history would lay open to her and to others.

John the Forerunner

Now the long-looked-for event had taken place in the home of Zacharias. A son had been born -- the future Baptist. On the eighth day--the day of his admission into the congregation of Israel by circumcision -- the child would receive its name. No domestic solemnity was so important or so joyous as that in which, by circumcision, the child had laid upon it, as it were, the yoke of the law, with all of duty and privilege which this implied. To Zacharias and Elisabeth the rite would have deep significance, as administered to the child of their old age so miraculously given, and connected with such a future. It was at the close of the rite that, in the benediction in which the child's name was inserted, the mother had interrupted the prayer. Without explaining her reason, she insisted that his name should not be that of his aged father, but John. Of all this Zacharias was, though deeply interested, yet a dumb witness. But now the father deepened the general astonishment when he wrote the same name. But this was not the sole cause for marvel. For forthwith the tongue of the dumb was loosed, and he who could not utter the name of the child now burst into praise of the name of the Lord. His last words had been those of unbelief, his first were those of praise; his last words had been a question --of doubt, his first were a hymn of assurance. "It was all most fitting. The question of unbelief had struck the priest dumb, for most truly unbelief cannot speak; and the answer of faith restored to him speech, for most truly does faith loosen the tongue. The first evidence of his dumbness had been that his tongue refused to speak the benediction to the people; and the first evidence of his restored power was that he spoke the benediction of God in a rapturous burst of praise and thanksgiving. The sign of the unbelieving priest standing before the awe-struck people, vainly essaying to make himself understood by signs, was most fitting; most fitting also that, when 'they made signs' to him, the believing father should burst in their hearing into a prophetic hymn."

"But far and wide, as these marvelous tidings spread throughout the hill-country of Judea, fear fell on all--the fear also of a nameless hope. The silence of the long clouded day had been broken, and the light, which had suddenly riven its gloom, laid itself on their hearts in expectancy: 'What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord also was with Him!'"

"A Thrill of Hope, the Weary World Rejoices"

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock "by night." - Luke 2:8.

With what charming simplicity does St. Luke narrate the circumstances attendant on the greatest event in human history! An event compared with which all others in history are insignificant, is recorded in a few words, without any attempt at exaggeration or embellishment. And yet, simple as is the account, there is deep fascination in the scene as it unfolded before the shepherds. The stillness over hill and valley, broken only by the bleating of the sheep; the unclouded brightness of the Syrian sky, with its innumerable stars; and the associations of these mountain pastures, dear to every Jew as the scene of David's youth -- were over and around them. The flocks were destined for temple-sacrifices, and accordingly the shepherds were not ordinary shepherds. To have received such surpassing honor from above, they must have been members, though poor and humble, of that true Israel, which included Simeon and Anna.

"Of a sudden came the long-delayed, unthought of announcement. Heaven and earth seemed to mingle, as suddenly an angel stood before their dazzled eyes, while the outstreaming glory of the Lord seemed to enwrap them as in a mantle of light. Surprise, awe, fear were hushed into calm and expectancy as from the angel they heard that what they saw boded not judgment, but ushered in to waiting Israel the great joy of those good tidings which he brought: that the long-promised Savior, Messiah, Lord, was born in the City of David, and that they themselves might go and see, and recognize Him by the humbleness of the circumstances surrounding His nativity."

"Fall on Your Knees, O Hear the Angels' Voices"

But though His birth was mean on earth below, it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."

"O Night Divine, O Night when Christ was Born"

The hymn had ceased; the light faded out of the sky; and the shepherds were alone. But the angelic message remained with them, and in amazed joy they hastened unto Bethlehem to "see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And with this thought we leave our meditation on the divine circumstances incident to our Savior's birth. To us, in a far deeper sense, hath the Lord made know "this thing which is come to pass." To us who can see in that Holy Night the birth of Him who is the Hope of the world and who shall soon be revealed in a mightier manifestation with great glory, when heaven and earth shall together sing His praises; to us the first Christmas anthem still ever rings with its message of "glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people."

- W. J. Siekman

The Spiritual Beehive

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." - Prov. 6:6-8.

(Our readers will be interested to know that Brother John T. Read has observed his 100th Birthday Anniversary October 11, 1977, and also 75 years of walking in the Christian Way. He was honored by a special all-day gathering of upwards of 250 friends at the church of the Cicero, Illinois, Ecclesia, on September 25, at which time he gave a short discourse and sang several solos. Needless to say, it was a blessed day of rejoicing and fellowship with those to whom he has so-endearred himself by his example of true Christian discipleship.)

IN the following discussion we shall follow somewhat the injunction of the above verse, except that we shall substitute the bee for the ant.

The hive of the honey bee presents a most interesting phenomenon and quite a marked analogy to the household of saints of this Gospel Age. Maeterlinck, in his "Life of the Bee," says, "They display an intelligence that, in many respects, is superior to any other creature outside of man, with the possible exception of the ant.

Many men have devoted their lives to the study of bees and their habits, so consequently a great deal is known about them, but in some respects they are still an enigma. For want of a better name, Maeterlinck speaks of the instinct or intelligence that seems to motivate bees in all they do, as being "the spirit of the hive," and back of that, of course, he says, is the law of the God that made them so.

The life of the hive centers about the queen, not as an individual but as an office. A normal hive consists of a queen, 7 or 8 princesses, several hundred drones, 9,000 eggs, 18,000 larvae, 36,000 nymphs, and 70,000 to 90,000 unfertile females, or workers. The life of the hive is very well systematized and ordered. Every worker knows just what is expected of it, and performs that duty day in and day out faithfully. Just how it is, decided what each individual bee is to do has never been definitely discovered. There is a competent police force, but there does not seem to be any head to the organization, for the queen is as mercilessly subject to the so-called spirit of the hive as is each and every bee in it.

The family life of the hive is centered in the queen; she is the mother of all, for she lays all the eggs. The drones, or males, do no work: they have no sting and are produced and tolerated solely that the queen or princesses may have a group from which to choose the unfortunate one with whom they mate, for he has but a short time to live following that event.

The unfertile females, or workers, are divided into many groups, each having its own particular duties to perform. There are the queen's bodyguard and helpers, who see that she is properly cared for and fed; there are the nurse-maids, who look after the eggs; and another group that feed the larvae and the nymphs; there are the honeycomb and cell workers; there are the housekeepers, who sweep and remove every particle of dirt; there are the guards, or police force, who watch to see that no alien bees or other foes intrude or harm the hive; and there are the honey-gatherers and honey-storers, whose duty it is to gather and store the honey for future use.

One very unusual and interesting feature about bees is their positive control over the development and future destiny of each egg. All the eggs are the same when laid but can be developed as unfertile females or drones or princesses, depending upon the way they are treated and fed.

Another characteristic well worthy of notice here is their utter self-sacrifice. In the spring of the year when the new generation has developed sufficiently to care for itself and when the hive would thus become too crowded, the old bees leave the hive in a swarm to seek a new home, where they will begin again to provide for those that will come after them. All the intricate construction of a well ordered beehive and all the honey they have worked so hard to store up is left to the young bees. To all appearances they do this joyfully; ordinarily, bees will sting on the slightest provocation, but on this, their one national holiday, they can be handled and picked up with bare hands.

All of this presents a very fitting analogy to the New Creation, for the Holy Spirit, the power or force or intelligence that directs the efforts of the New Creation, is also invisible; nevertheless, this is what begets and quickens and energizes us and causes us to grow in Christ-likeness when we really function as new creatures. Our invisible Head operates through this spirit, and we are admonished to call no man (or organization) master. It is the Lord, through His Holy Spirit in the Word of truth, that enlightens us and begets us through the promises of that Word to the hope of a heavenly inheritance. There is nothing in connection with our experiences as new creatures that does not result from the Holy Spirit, and consequently from God, whose spirit it is. Therefore, we are admonished to "be filled with the spirit," otherwise we will not have proper direction and will lean to our own understanding and desires. To be filled with the spirit, we must maintain our connection with the fountain of life so that, as our capacity grows, we may be filled by having the sluices and ducts of our lives open to the fountain.

There is no lack or limit to God's spirit; the measure of that spirit which we possess is determined by our capacity to receive and by the way we keep the channels open for its free flow. Jesus declared (Luke 11:13) that the Father is more ready and willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than is an earthly parent to give good gifts unto his children. The Father is willing to give, and the spirit is there in abundance: what, then, limits the amount of the spirit we possess? or what keeps us from being filled to overflowing? Merely our own capacity and readiness to receive.

More than likely, in voicing this admonition to be filled with the spirit, the apostle also had in mind the fact that we are leaky vessels and must go to the fountain-head daily in order to keep filled.

The One Mother

We often cite the fact that we have but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father over all; but we seldom mention the fact that we also have but one mother common to each and all of the New Creation. Insofar as we know, we who have been nurtured in present truth are the only ones who realize that we have a mother. Who or what is our mother?

In Isaiah 51:1, 2 we read: "Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the Rock, ["whence" not in the original text] ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that **bare you.**" Now, how may we identify the class to whom these words are spoken? Fortunately, it is not necessary for us to identify it, as the Apostle Paul has done so for us.

In Galatians 3:26, 27, 29 (Weymouth) we read "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then are you indeed true descendants of Abraham, and are **heirs** in fulfillment of **the promise.**"

Here Paul tells us that the Church are not only the sons of God through coming into Christ by faith, but that also, by the same act of faith, they have become the seed of Abraham in fulfillment of the promise God made him. Now note what he says further, in Galatians 4:16-28: "It is written that Abraham had two sons; one by the slave-girl and one by the free woman. But we see that the child of the slave-girl was born **in the common** course of **nature**; whereas the child of the free woman was born **in fulfillment of the promise**. All this is allegorical; for these women represent two covenants. One has its origin on Mount Sinai, and bears children destined for slavery. This is Hagar; for the name Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, which is in bondage together with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, and she is our mother. . . . And you, brethren, like Isaac, are children born **in fulfillment of a promise**." - Weymouth.

So then, our mother is the original Abrahamic covenant, pictured by Sarah; she represents the free covenant, or promise, that God made to Abraham, for her child, Isaac, representative of the true Church, as well as of Christ (Gal. 3:29), was born in fulfillment of the promise: "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you."

Here, then, we have the analogy between the beehive and the New Creation in that each has but one mother. As the queen is the mother of all the bees in the hive, so we, including our Lord and Head, are all children of the original covenant, Sarah, which for a time was barren but eventually brought forth children through faith (Heb. 11:11) in fulfillment of the promise. The queen is the mother of the hive, not the ruler: she simply represents the promise of seed, of children. Likewise, the Abrahamic covenant is not our head, or ruler, but simply represents the womb of promise through which the Holy Spirit begets us as new creatures in Christ when, in answer to the call, we present ourselves in whole-hearted consecration to do the Father's will. The promise which God gave to Abraham was unconditional; but to become inheritors of that promise, we must follow in Jesus' footsteps and dedicate ourselves wholly to the will and service of God. Manifestly, the members of the Church are the ones referred to when God, through the prophet, says, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." This is the step which each one must take to place himself in line as an inheritor of God's promise to Abraham.

It is not the intention here to try to fit every peculiarity and custom of the bees into an analogy of some feature in the life and development of the New Creation, but only a few of their traits that stand out as good object-lessons.

Predestined Characteristics

There is never any uncertainty as to the kind of duties each bee is to perform. Just why or how they know what to do has never been fully determined; possibly the answer is found in pre-destination, in the preparation, care, and kind of food each larva and nymph receives in the various stages of its development; for, as Maeterlinck points out, the variations of sex and rank are determined, not by the kind of an egg the queen lays, but by its placement in the hive under the nursemaids, who watch over the cells, eggs, larvae, and nymphs to minister proper care and food for the desired end.

God, in predetermining the characteristics which each one of this class will have to develop, arranges through His Holy Spirit his environment, experiences, and other providential leadings (the nurse-maids, so to speak) so as to work out in him the pleasure of His will. He does not coerce the will or compel us to prove worthy; no, there must be whole-hearted cooperation and sincere desire on our part.

The apostle's statement that "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him" indicates that God retains control over matters pertaining to His New Creation. This does not mean however, that every ruling and every appointment made by the various class or church groups is necessarily the Lord's will, for past experience shows that at times God overrules the voice of such and makes His own appointments. When the early apostles sought to replace Judas, even going so far as to do it by lot that, as they thought, God's will might be expressed thereby, God simply ignored their choice and, in His own due time and way, appointed the Apostle Paul. - Then time and again in the past two thousand years the Lord's true saints have been forced to repudiate leaders and organizations which had gone astray from the truth and spirit of the Lord. If all church appointments are to be considered as appointments of the Lord, then we should never repudiate a leader or take a stand against a majority; and if that were the case, we should still be members of the Society or the Catholic Church. We should always endeavor to be directed by the Lord's spirit in appointing our leaders, but if we make a mistake, the Lord can overrule it for our good.

With bees, as already mentioned, there is first the egg, then the larva, then the nymph, and finally the fully developed bee. You cannot tell by looking at the egg or the larva what the result will be, but by the time the development has reached the nymph stage, there are definite indications.

The egg would illustrate the stage of our begetting, when hope is born in us of eventually attaining to joint-heirship with our Lord in the queenly station. Then comes the quickening into life and activity of the embryo new creature, when food and exercise begin to play an important part. This stage would correspond to the larva, but there are as yet no very distinguishing marks or characteristics; but by the time the larva has developed into a nymph, the distinguishing marks of its future are quite evident. This would illustrate the transformed state in our development as embryo new creatures, the development that has been attained by the transforming or renewing of our minds. Those who reach this stage are able to partake of strong meat instead of being fed simply on the milk of the Word. These have attained to quite a degree of knowledge of God, whom to know is life eternal.

The Christian's development has been compared to a race-course having a starting-point, quarter marks, and a finishing 'goal. The nymph stage would compare to the third quarter-mark, which, in this comparison, would represent an advanced stage in Christ-like development. It is the "spirit of the hive" that causes the bee nurse-maids to work out the proper development of egg, larva, and nymph; likewise, it is God's Holy Spirit working in us and through the various agencies that minister to us, that brings about our development. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God." "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, **even as by the spirit of the Lord.**" "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

The last quarter of the course brings crucial tests of fitness and endurance. It may seem to those closely associated with us that our development gives evidence of all the elements of God-likeness; but until the goal is reached, there is possibility of failure. It is he that endures unto the end that will be saved and gain the crown of life. "In your patience [patient endurance] possess ye your souls."

Paul knew when he had reached the goal. Previous to that time he says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and

reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The time came, however, when he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day."

The unique characteristic of bees in their ability to control sex and development through care and quality of food was used by our Pastor to illustrate how it is possible to be begotten of the spirit in one hope of our calling and then end up in widely differing classes. Any egg laid by the queen bee may become a princess if the right food and conditions are maintained; or under other conditions it may become an unfertile female, or a drone.

Drones play rather an ignominious part in the life the hive: they are lazy; they feed only themselves; they are greedy and careless and dirty and indifferent to the welfare of the hive. And as soon as the new queen is chosen and has mated, the workers round up the drones and destroy them.

In our study of the Lord's Word we learn that there are also three possibilities for every one begotten of the spirit, depending upon development and growth in Christ-likeness. If we give diligence to make our calling and election sure, adding in our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-affection, and love, we shall not fail, "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." But if we do not study to show ourselves approved unto God, if we are not diligent in partaking of the food designated by the Holy Spirit as being essential to those who will become the queen-bride, the potential mother of restored mankind, then we may be of the great company class, the unfertile nurse-maids, so to speak, servants before the throne, but without the functions of the bride. And failing this, there would remain only the fate of the drones, "total destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." - 2 Thess. 1:9.

Wisdom and Sacrifice

Maeterlinck's statement that bees display an unusual intelligence, "more than any other creature outside of man with the possible exception of the ant," is also of interest in this analogy, for as their habits are observed, it becomes evident that this wisdom is not for self-preservation but is with the view to the future, particularly of those that shall follow them. They lay by in store for the long winter months and for the new generation that will occupy the hive when they leave because of overcrowding. This means a lot of self-sacrifice on their part in behalf of the new generation and in obedience to the "spirit of the hive."

Likewise, according to the Scriptures, the class that obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and follow in the Lord's footsteps of self-sacrifice, also display a wisdom that is far in excess of the wisdom of all other classes in this world.

All classes do not display the same amount of wisdom. There are those who think only of their immediate need or lust or desire; such will steal or murder or take any advantage they can in order to satisfy their desires. This course displays a very low standard of wisdom even for fallen man. Closely allied to this group is the class whose whole aim is to accumulate worldly riches by any means they can, so long as they can escape the hands of the law. Then there are those whose aim it is to get glory and honor; and again those whose desire it is to rule. And so on until advancing in the scale of earthly wisdom, we come to the classes who seek wisdom in one form or another. Some of these spend their lives delving into the secrets of nature or science or astronomy; such men display considerable wisdom and are of much benefit to the race. And then,

there is a class, very unselfish, who devote their lives to social uplift and to physical, mental, and moral betterment of their fellow man; such show considerable wisdom and much self-sacrifice and will no doubt receive honor of the Lord and be suitably rewarded.

But those who seek to follow in Jesus' footsteps, follow a course of wisdom that is much higher than any of these: theirs is the wisdom from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

In the display of this heavenly wisdom, the illustrious leader of this class-seeing with vision afar off, a restored, righteous, and happy world, capable of fulfilling their intended destiny to the glory of God -- willingly gave up the glory He had with the Father, came to earth as a man, suffered and died in order that He might bring about the realization of this vision. So God-like was He in this course that it is declared of Him in the eighth chapter of Proverbs that He is the personification of wisdom: "I am understanding."

Those who follow in His footsteps display this same heavenly wisdom, and through self-sacrifice and self-denial seek to fit themselves to assist in the great work of restoring mankind. They, like the bees, look to the future, to the blessing of all mankind, and are willing to undergo all manner of suffering and depredation that they may have a share in bringing about the blessings of life and happiness. This seems utter foolishness to the world, but on the other hand, the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, whereas He approves of those who follow His Son. So when we are admonished that "wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding," this is the kind of wisdom that is meant.

Honey

The Bible contains a number of references to honey, and the inference is that bees, in storing up honey, are of much benefit to mankind. When Jacob sent his sons into Egypt to buy corn, he sent honey with them as a special gift to the king. This of itself would seem to indicate that honey was greatly prized. Then, too, one of the great inducements held out to the Jews to encourage them to press on to Canaan was that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, two perfect foods supplied by nature without destruction of life. Then again, when the Lord desired a superlative comparison that He might convey to men's minds the value and desirability of His Word and His judgments, He said, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." "How sweet are Thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth !" - Psa. 19:10.

Bees gather honey by searching out the nectar from myriads of blossoms of fruit and flower, and so carry the pollen from flower to flower that thereby we may have fruit. Without the bees our fruit crops would be very small.

Perhaps the analogy is not as well marked here as in some of the other points we have noted, but it is manifest that if we work in obedience to the dictates of the spirit, we will store up sweetness from the flowers (usually spoken of as trials and tribulations) along our way even though they be covered with thorns. Furthermore, were it not for the pollenization of experience with experience in our trials, we would bear but little fruit. As workers together with God, we are interested in laying up the nectar, or essence, that comes from the fruit and graces of the spirit, that sweetness which, considered as one fragrant and life enriching whole, is summed up in the word love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law"; "love is the end of the commandment." Love, tested and approved, is the goal for which we strive.

- J. T. Read

Reigning Grace

"They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life." - Romans 5:17.

WE OFTEN hear the remark made that in such and such a book of the Bible "there is a text ... " Now, the Bible is not simply a compilation or string of so-called texts; the Scriptures, given by inspiration of God, are living messages, and should be read and studied as such. One quite familiar with music knows that in all good musical compositions there is one theme which is carried throughout the whole of the opus, but that there are subordinate themes weaving in and out, all advancing the main theme. So it is with the Scriptures; and thus it is with the Epistle to the Romans from which our topic is taken.

There is internal evidence that no apostle had ever been to Rome to give authentic teaching prior to Paul's visit to the Christians of that city; -- at least not prior to the writing of his letter; for, in chapter one, verse 11 (Rom. 1:11), we read, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established"; and in chapter fifteen, verse 20 (Rom. 15:20), "So have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Recognizing this, we can easily grasp the reason for the wide sweep of this Roman Epistle. It was manifestly written to set forth "the gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). But in developing this Gospel, many subordinate truths were woven into the main theme in order to advance the subject matter itself. The Apostle treats of the condemnation; the corruptness of the fallen nature; the impossibility of salvation by works; the just government of God in dealing with the sinful race; justification by faith; the strength of the sinful nature and the more powerful new nature received by grace; the quickening spirit; the security of the called and sanctified; the place of Israel in the plan of God; of election; the Christian's attitude toward the civil authorities; the relationship of believers toward fellow believers; exhortation to holiness because of this relationship, etc.; all of which are elements of the one doctrine of Christ.

Having developed his theme through chapter four and having shown that righteousness with God can be obtained by imputation to faith, the Apostle continues with an enumeration of some of the joyous accompaniments of justifying faith: "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1, 2). Then, when we come to Rom. 5:12, the "wherefore" must hark back to an area of his discussion where he had digressed to enlarge upon a point that needed clarification. By carefully reading and following his flow of thought, we find that the Apostle is resuming the theme he had left at Rom. 3:19-23 which reads in part, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Now, at chapter five, verse 12 (Rom. 5:12), he resumes: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This is followed by a parenthetical statement introduced by "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Adam's death was the result of a broken commandment; but from Adam to Moses, to the giving of the law at Sinai, there was no God-given commandment the violation of which would bring the penalty of death. Therefore, the Apostle reasons, inasmuch as all die, death being common to all, it must be the consequence of one man's disobedience. Death reigns because of sin.

TWO CONTRASTED "REIGNS"

It is in the 14th verse of chapter five (Rom. 5:14) that the Apostle, in advancing his Gospel message, introduces a theme which is characterized by the thought of a reign: "death reigned from Adam to Moses." We note how this thought is carried through the rest of chapter five, and on through chapter six: "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one"; and, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord." And, again, "Death hath no more dominion [reign] over him [Christ]"; "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof." "Sin shall not have dominion [reign] over you"; "Being made free from [the reign of] sin"; "For when you were the servants [under the reign] of sin"; "For the wages [the end result of the reign] of sin is death."

Looking back to verse 17 of chapter five (Rom. 5:17), we read, "they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," and comparing this with Romans 6:23, we discover that the "gift of righteousness" is eternal life, the gift of God; they are one and the same thing. The gift of righteousness is the impartation of a new spirit of life which must necessarily be the accompaniment of the imputation of righteousness; both are by grace through faith, and can be considered from God's standpoint as one and the same; for a faith that is lifeless is no faith at all;-faith that does not operate is dead. - James 2:26.

To correctly get the lesson and the spiritual encouragement from the sixth chapter of Romans we must see that the whole passage is in answer to the question propounded in verse one, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The query is suggested to the mind of the Apostle because he realizes that he has left himself open to the accusation that he is teaching just such a doctrine by his previous statement that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The thought being that if it is true that the more one has been under the dominion of sin, the more grace God shows in redeeming from sin. Supposing some might say, "Why not continue in sin and so give God an opportunity to show even more grace?" This would make God the sinner's debtor! No wonder, then, that the Apostle immediately disclaims any such interpretation or construction being put on his words. "God forbid," he cries, "know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

FULL IMPLICATION OF BAPTISM

Whenever the subject of baptism is considered in the New Testament it is not restricted to dying, or being dead, apart from being raised to newness of life. For instance: in Colossians 2:12, 13 we read, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins ... bath he quickened together with him. .." And in 1 Peter 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism into death is not the end, but it is a necessary accompaniment to walking in a new life in Christ. And this is what is confessed in baptism, as the Apostle Paul continues, "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." - Romans 6:6.

Now this statement, "the body of sin might be destroyed," has been interpreted as meaning that the whole accumulated mass of sins is being put away by our being dead with Christ as part of a

sin-offering; but that this is not so is palpably plain when we carefully consider what is written; for we read not that our justified life is reckoned dead, or crucified with Christ, but rather that our "old man," the nature derived from Adam, "is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Reading from other translations may make this more evident. Weymouth's translation reads, "Our old self was nailed to the cross with Him, in order that our sinful nature might be neutralized, so that we should no longer be slaves of sin; for he who has died is absolved from his sin." Williams renders it, "For we know that our former self was crucified with Him, to make our body, that is liable to sin, inactive, so that we might not a moment longer continue to be slaves to sin." Moffatt reads, "Knowing as we do that our old self has been crucified with him in order to crush the sinful body and free us from any further slavery to sin." Diaglott: "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, so that the body of sin may be rendered powerless; that we may no longer be enslaved to sin." Rotherham: "Of this taking note -- That our old man was crucified together with him, in order that the sinful body might be made powerless, that we no longer be in servitude to sin." These are but a few available translations, none of which give the thought otherwise than that the judgment of sin has been met for us by Jesus' death on the cross; and that in baptism we identify ourselves with that judgment, and rise with him in the power of a new life. Both of these aspects are seen in the 6th chapter of Romans. It is first necessary before a new spirit of life can be given that the old sinful nature, "our old man," should meet the judgment of God, as we read also in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

How well the author of the Hebrew Epistle (Heb. 9:13, 14) brings this to the minds of his readers: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh [that is, made the Israelite ceremonially clean], how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" It is the settling of the claims of Divine holiness satisfactorily to the conscience that enables us in faith to take a position before God as raised with Christ in newness of life.

GRACE TRIUMPHANT OVER SIN

When the Apostle writes in Romans 3:23, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," we understand this to mean come short of the perfection of life which reflects the Divine likeness and is manifested by perfect obedience to the Divine will. None measure up to this; sin has marred the god-likeness of the created Adam and all his posterity. In whatever respect we fail to reflect the likeness of the Creator, that is sin. One of the purposes of the Mosaic Law was to convict of this, and thus of the need of someone to redeem them from the just penalty of the broken law, and the resultant sinful condition. God in grace does just that by giving power to walk in a new life in Christ. Accordingly, in expanding the thought introduced in Romans 5:21, the Apostle continues in Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." This "let not" implies that now there is a choice; that whereas we were once in bondage to sin and unrighteousness, we no longer need be; a definite decision has been made; we have identified ourselves with the sin-bearing Jesus, both in death and resurrection; we have been delivered from the power of darkness, and have been translated into the dominion of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Or, as Paul writes in another epistle, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." - 2 Cor. 5:17.

In times past "the motions of sin," the sinful propensities of the Adamic nature, were not only uncontrolled, they were not even considered as sinful. But once the conscience was aroused to an awareness of the degrading tendencies of the fleshly nature as it sets itself in opposition to the

known will of God, and of the slavery to the demands of this nature, a deliverance was sought; -- a deliverance which is found by accepting the "redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Struggle as we might, make vows as we will, these only accentuate the slavery, until we are led to exclaim with the Apostle, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" [marginal reading]. The answer is the same for us as it was for Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." So the Apostle follows up his "let not sin reign" of Romans 6:12, with "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead ... for sin shall not have dominion [reign] over you: for you are not under the law but under grace."

In view of the foregoing, how do the words of Romans 8:1-11 thrill our hearts even as they have stimulated saints all the years since they were first written! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus ... For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death [has made me free from the reign of sin working death] ... God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, by a sacrifice for sin [margin], condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh [no longer subject to its reign], but after the spirit" But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you." And further, "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Brethren, how is it with us? Whether we be young in the faith, or of those who have followed the way of truth for many years, are we experiencing the reign of grace as a living reality -- this abundant grace; this unlimited power and favor of God apprehended by faith? What a wealth of encouragement, of instruction, of exhortation and comfort are in these 5th to 8th chapters of the Roman Epistle! To know the steady and strengthening influence of these chapters as again and again they are read and pondered and assimilated is to be sanctified. Are there any of our readers who, hearing the call to follow Christ, are yet hesitating because of a doubt of their ability to accomplish the will of God for them? To all such we present again the words of the Apostle, "they shall receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, and shall reign in life through union with and by Jesus Christ."

- F. A. Essler

Report of Pilgrim Visit to Britain

IT IS not often that one has the same joyous privilege in the Lord's service for the third time. However, such was the case as Sister Webster and I winged our way over the broad Atlantic. We were to have one more visit and a renewal of Christian fellowship with the Lord's dear ones in Britain.

A smooth and uneventful flight in the Jet 747 brought us to Heathrow Airport at an early hour in the morning of June 6, 1977. We were met by dear Bro. and Sis. Charlton, who very kindly took us to their home for a bit of relaxation prior to our going to a hotel in London for a temporary stay, that we might have fellowship with some in that immediate area who, because of ill health, we would not see otherwise.

We were in the British Isles some five weeks and experienced joyous fellowship with brethren known to us before and some we had not previously met. These dear brethren recognize their Lord as Master supreme in their lives, a joy to us long to be remembered.

Some of the ecclesias we visited were mentioned in the May June Herald. Visits to others not mentioned had not been finalized before the Herald went to press. Evident everywhere was keen anticipation of the coming Kingdom and the prospect of sharing with Christ in the great work of rehabilitation of the whole world.

The Conventions at Chesham and Manchester were well attended and spiritually uplifting. The same warm spirit was sustained in the various classes (about 18) throughout our pilgrimage. Addicted to hospitality and ministry to' the saints well describes the attitude of the brethren throughout the entire trip-a heart warming evidence of Christ-like love abounding on every hand.

Our own message was designed to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance in the things that bear upon the development of THE CHRIST. This met with encouraging response, indicating 'a deep appreciation for the things of the spirit,-the things which magnify the love of Christ with its wonderful power for drawing His people into unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

The problem of getting back to Heathrow Airport in order to get our plane was solved for us by Bro. & Sis. Charlton.

After bidding a fond farewell to our dear friends we boarded the plane and, settling into our seats, reflected over and over again upon the blessings we had enjoyed, for which we raised thankful hearts to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, whose we are and whom we serve.

- James B. Webster

"Fashioned Like Unto His Glorious Body"

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." - Philipians 3:20, 21.

THIS passage has been generally misunderstood to teach that our human bodies are vile things, but that, in the Lord's due time they are to undergo a miraculous change, becoming like the glorified body of Christ.

It is true that we, the Church, if faithful, are to be made like our Lord (1 John 3:2), but that thought is not under discussion in Philipians 3:20, 21. Here, as in all true Scripture study, we must first satisfy ourselves that we have a correct translation, and then study it in the light of its context. A preferred translation is given in the American Revised Version:

"For our citizenship [margin: commonwealth] is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself."

In studying this text in relation to its context two points are at once apparent: (1) The word "body" is in the singular, not the plural, and (2) the Apostle is contrasting, not the body of one member of the Church on earth with the body that member will have in heaven, but the status of Christ's Body (the Church) on earth with its status when the Lord returns for her.

St. Paul's general line of argument seems clear: In the company of professing Christ followers there are two main groups—the true and the false. They are easily distinguished, not by slight differences of viewpoint on some "hard to be understood" points of doctrine on which even inspired Apostles differed (2 Pet. 3:16), but by the general tenor of their lives. The false are described as of earthly mind—who live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (Phil. 3:18, 19.) The true are not to be content with merely adding to their store of knowledge, but, as Moffatt's choice translation puts it, "We must let our steps be guided by such truth as we have attained." (Phil. 3:16.) This must be true both of the mature and the immature. (Phil. 3:15.) It is mandatory in the Christian experience that each fresh item of truth understood be promptly put into practice. At once it is to have its place in "guiding the steps." This principle was so elementary with Paul that he could, in all humility, consistently urge upon the brethren not merely that they pay attention to his teaching, but that they copy him—and even were to take note of those who lived by the example he set. - Phil. 3:17, 18, Moffatt.

Then comes the great contrast, which we may well believe was ever present to his mind—the state of humiliation in which the true Church, the Body of Christ, was to complete its course, and the state of glory to which she would be changed. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4). "Then," as Brother Russell has so well expressed it (*Reprints*, p. R1102), "the Church shall in reality be a glorious body, a body suitable in every way for the high position she shall fill as the Bride of Christ—the companion of the Son of God for all eternity, his joint-heir in all things, and his efficient and thoroughly capable coworker in the great mission to which Jehovah hath appointed the Christ -- Head and Body -- Bridegroom and Bride. Together they shall constitute the great Prophet, Priest, and King. whom Jehovah hath anointed; and their glory shall appear to all intelligent creatures in heaven and earth."

- P. L. Read

Courage

Because I hold it sinful to despond,
And will not let the bitterness of life
Blind me with burning tears, but look beyond
Its tumult and its strife,

Because I lift my head above the mist,
Where the sun shines and the broad breezes blow,
By every ray and every raindrop kissed
That God's love doth bestow;

Think you I find no bitterness at all,
No burden to be borne, like Christian's pack?
Think you there are no ready tears to fall,
Because I keep them back?

Why should I hug life's ills with cold reserve,
To curse myself and all who love me? Nay!
A thousand times more good than I deserve
God gives me every day.

And in each one of these rebellious tears
Kept bravely back, He makes a rainbow shine;
Grateful, I take His slightest gift; no fears
Nor any doubts are mine.

Dark skies must clear, and when the clouds are past
One golden day redeems a weary year;
Patient I listen, sure that sweet at last
Will sound His voice of cheer.

- *Celia Thaxter*

Entered into Rest

Martha Bicknell, Mystic, Conn.
Jane Carrington, England
Edwin Cheatele, Chicago, Ill.
Kay E.,Christiansen, Bremerton, Wash.
Mattie Covington, Bennettsville, S.C.
Evelin Delaney, Belleville, Ont.
Esther T. Hallquist, Torrance, Calif.
Julia E. Hansen, Roseland, Ill.
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