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The Mind of the Master

A MEDITATION FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." - Phil 2:5.

AT THIS season of the year it is our custom to meditate on the story of the Advent, to let our thoughts linger either on our Lord's birth itself, or on some of the remarkable incidents which attended it. While we may, and do, question the accuracy of the date, December 25, believing rather that His birth occurred in the autumn, at the beginning of the Jewish year, yet as has been truly observed, since our Lord did not anywhere indicate His wish that we should celebrate His birthday at all, and since the general celebration takes place at this season, we may appropriately enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and His dear Son, our Redeemer.

In our meditations, however, while we invariably derive much spiritual profit as in spirit we accompany (the shepherds to Bethlehem (Luke 2:15) it is not because we dwell only or mainly on our Lord's birth, or on any of the circumstances attending it, but rather because we endeavor, under the guidance of the Spirit, to penetrate to its inner significance—to the *mind* of Christ Jesus, rather than to His *birth*, to the motives which prompted Him to lay aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), to the purpose for which He emptied Himself of that glory and took on Him the form of a servant. For the mind of Christ must certainly be much more to us than any event in His history, however great. *That* may be the glory of an age; but *this* is for all time, for all eternity. And we know of no passage of Scripture which throws a clearer, stronger, light on the mind of Christ, on the inward significance, on the motive and purpose, whether of the Advent or of the Atonement, than the pregnant verses from which our text is taken. The whole passage (Phil. 2:5-8) reads, in the American Revised Version:

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

There is much in this passage, indeed, both of doctrine and of duty, which we must pass by with no more than a word, or even without a word; for it is a very full cup which St. Paul here lifts to

our lips, and we cannot hope to drain it. The virtue, the grace, of humility, for instance, was never more splendidly illustrated, or more weightily enforced on those who were tempted to think more -- of themselves, and more highly, than they ought to think. Then, too, the doctrine of the pre-human existence of Christ is nowhere more distinctly and impressively affirmed, and not affirmed only, but assumed and implied in the whole structure of the sentence, and in many of the leading words it contains. Nor, again, is there anywhere a clearer implication of the heart-moving truth that in humbling Himself to manhood, to death, to shame, Christ was serving a higher will than His own; that it was not only His own good pleasure but also the good pleasure of the Father that no man should perish, but that all should turn and live.

But precious and weighty as these truths are, we should not sound the depths of the Apostle's words, or reach their choicest treasure, were we to rest in these. There are truths in them which are as much more precious as they are more seasonable; truths more powerful than the Star which hung over the cradle of the Holy Babe, more sweet than the angelic Song which announced His birth; truths which cast their full light on the very mind of Christ, and teach us in the simplest way both *why* and *for what* He came down to earth and was found in fashion as a man. It is, then, to the motive of His Advent, and to the purpose for which He came, that in the following paragraphs our attention will be particularly drawn.

HE WHO WAS RICH

First of all we are carried back, and carried up, to those pre-natal times in which He was a mighty Spirit-being, the Logos of Jehovah. (John 1:1.) While existing thus in the form of God, exercising the power of the Father, and sharing His glory, our Savior was of humble mind. He did not, as did Satan, meditate a usurpation of Divine authority, in order to exalt Himself and to seek a name higher than that which was rightly His. He had no thought of robbing the Father of *His* honor and glory by putting Himself on an equality with the Father. On the contrary, He had the same spirit then, which He later manifested on earth, when He said "My Father is greater than I." - John 14:28.

Not only did He not seek to rob the Father of *His* glory -- He did not even clutch at the glory of His own highly exalted state. So far was He from grasping at the splendors of His highly exalted office as at a prize which He could not forego, that He relinquished them, voluntarily; divested Himself of His royal robes; emptied Himself of His glory.

In effect, then, we are taught in this passage to think of the first humiliation of the Son of God, His humiliation to manhood, as prompted by pure love and pity for men--a love and pity so pure, so powerful, as to constrain Him to stoop to their condition and to share their lot. He is in the form, shares the power and the glory, of God; but all this He resigns in order that He may accept the Father's proposal that He become the Savior of men, coming into the world, first to redeem it, and later during the Times of Restitution promised (Acts 3:19), to become its King and Deliverer; to regenerate men and enable them to regain the Divine image they have lost.

This was the "mind of Christ" before He became man and dwelt among us. And it continued to be His mind after He took our flesh and likeness.* As He had emptied Himself of the glory He had on the spirit plane, so also, by a continuing voluntary humiliation, He emptied Himself of the glory of manhood. Wealth, rank, power, learning, genius, fame, are the qualities and conditions which command for men the admiration of their fellows; in these lie the glory, the splendor of human life. As man, He might have set Himself to be a great man, to exercise authority, to win reverence, to command service. And yet He who even on the human side had an ancestry so ancient and honorable; He who, if only by His willingness to be the servant of all, and His power to touch the hearts of all,

had a claim to rule superior to that of any of the princes of this world; He who possessed divine wisdom, and who spake as never man spake; He who alone was without sin and never at any time transgressed any commandment; He who was so good that the world has received from Him a new ideal of goodness; He, therefore, who; of all men, might justly have claimed the most splendid and impressive human conditions and to be revered as their Hero, Sage, Ruler, Saint, declined these human glories (as just before He had divested Himself of the glories of heaven) and took on Himself the form of a servant (or, as the word really means, the form of *a slave*); refused every advantage which He could not share with the lowliest of the children of men, and humbled Himself to endure whatever is sordid, painful, sad, or terrible in their lot. Do we, any of us, know the sting and temptation of penury and homelessness: He had neither shekel to pay a tax with, nor a place in which to lay His head. Have we, any of us, blushed under the shame of dependence? He owed bed, food, raiment, to a few poor friends who ministered unto Him out of their scanty resources. Are we oppressed with infirmities and troubled by sorrows for which there seems no remedy? He Himself bare our sorrows and carried our infirmities. Do we dread death? He humbled Him, self and became obedient to the Father even unto death. Do we dread shame even more than death? His obedience to the Father's will took Him to the shame of the Cross. Have we felt how sharper than the serpent's tooth or the sting of death itself is ingratitude -- the indifference or the hostility, of those whom we have loved and served? He came to His owls and His own received Him not. He was rejected and despised by those for whom He had laid aside the glories both of, heaven and earth.

THE PATTERN FOR US

This was, and is, the mind of Christ. It was the mind that brought Him down to earth, the mind that animated Him while He was on earth; the mind which animated Him when He ascended to heaven; the mind that even now animates Him as He begins to take His great power and to reign. His is a mind that delights to *share*; a mind which, so far from clutching at anything it possesses, counts nothing its own until all who are capable of receiving of His fulness have had the opportunity to do so; a mind that could not be satisfied to enjoy anything thoroughly, until a way could be found (no matter at what cost to Himself) whereby *we* might be reconciled to Himself and His Father, a way whereby we might be

"PURIFIED MADE WHITE AND TRIED"

and thus fitted to share His joy, so that He might "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied"; a mind which moved Him to divest Himself of every splendor by which we were not also irradiated; to refuse every *cup* of blessing of which we could not drink; nay, more a mind which constrained Him to experience every poor and mean and painful condition by which, however justly, we were tried, and to drink of every cup of shame and sorrow, which by our transgressions we had poured for ourselves.

This mind, which was, and is, in Christ Jesus, is also to be in us, is to dominate all the thoughts, affections, and habits of our life. In the Church at Philippi, to whom the Apostle penned these lines, there were some who were in danger of developing a self-asserting, vainglorious habit. To such, the mind of Christ is held up as a pattern, to bring them back to the better way, that way of love, which looks every man on the things of others-seeks not his own but another's welfare. As they became possessed of the mind of Christ they would do nothing through strife or vainglory but in lowliness of mind each would esteem other better than himself - Phil. 2:3, 4; 1 Cor. 10:24.

At this hallowed Christmas season, when men's hearts everywhere are more than usually stirred with emotions of friendship and love, when, even in a world at war, feelings of benevolence and

compassion prompt all right-minded people of every faith to deeds of mercy and kindness, may we, who call ourselves by His Name, be granted His spirit -- His mind -- in rich measure. Let us be ready to empty ourselves of every earthly honor, and clutch at nothing we cannot share with our brethren. Like St. Paul, let us be ready to spend and be spent in the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the Brethren (2 Cor. 12:15), that all may know we have been with Jesus and learned of Him -- that we have, indeed, the mind of Christ. - 1 Cor. 2:16.

- P. L. Read

The Glorious Proclamation

"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:1-20.

THE MESSAGE of the angels to the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains sounds more and more precious to each child of God in proportion as he grows in grace and knowledge. As his eyes and ears of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great Plan of the Ages, that prophetic message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be too frequently called to the great event which lies at the foundation of that message -- our Savior's birth.

It matters not that December 25th is not the real anniversary of the Savior's birth, but probably the anniversary of the annunciation by the angel Gabriel, the anniversary of the Virgin Mary's conception, our Lord being born nine months later on the calendar, or about October 1. One so great, whose birth, death, and resurrection from the dead means so much to the human family, may be remembered and celebrated any day, every day, by all who appreciate what he has done for our race. Since, then, the majority of Christian people have become habituated to the celebration of December 25th as our Lord's birthday, we need make no protest, but join with all in celebrating that day with rejoicing of heart, giving gifts and remembrances one to another, thus copying divine favor, which gave to mankind the Son of God as a gift of mercy and love for our redemption.

For four thousand years and more the promises of God, clothed in more or less obscurity, had been given to mankind, intimating that ultimately the great curse of sin and death which had come upon the world through Father Adam's disobedience in Eden would be rolled away, and instead of a curse, a blight, would come a blessing of the Lord with life-giving refreshment. In various types, figures, and shadowy promises this lesson had come down through the ages to the time of our Lord's birth, especially amongst the Jews, who were the divinely favored and covenanted people. And since the Jews were of a commercial spirit, many of them were to be found in all parts of the civilized world; and thus amongst every people the faith in the one God and the hope of Israel through a Messiah were more or less made known, so that at the time of our Lord's birth we read, "All men were in expectation" of a soon-coming Messiah. Doubtless this expectation was built upon the interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, which we now see clearly marked the year of our Lord's majority, when he was thirty years of age and made his consecration to his work and received the begetting of the holy spirit, his anointing as the great antitypical high priest and as the great antitypical king over Israel and the world.

FROM BETHLEHEM TO NAZARETH

In olden times there were honorable cities and mean cities. Nazareth was generally recognized as one of the latter, while Bethlehem was distinctly one of the former--the City of David, Israel's beloved king. The Scriptures explain to us that Mary, our Lord's mother, and Joseph, her husband, were both of the lineage of David, and that in a seemingly accidental manner the prophecy was fulfilled which foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

The Roman empire at that time bore rule over the whole world, the Jews being subject to it, but waiting expectantly, restlessly, for the coming Messiah, who would deliver them from being subject people and make of them the ruling caste in his Kingdom, the dominion of the world. Rome's great emperor, Caesar Augustus, was in power at this time, and had sent forth his decree

for a polling or census of the whole world for purposes of taxation, etc. Luke informs us that it was in response to this royal decree that Joseph and Mary went up to their native city to be enrolled, and that thus it was that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and on account of the great concourse of people at the same time and for the same purpose, accommodations being scarce, the stable of the inn, or khan, was used by some as a lodging. Joseph and Mary, being of the late comers, were forced to occupy these humble quarters, and thus it was that the King of Glory, whose Kingdom is by and by to rule the world, was in the time of his flesh born in a stable and cradled in a manger.

Noble shepherds those must have been to whom the Almighty sent the angelic message respecting the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, which has rung down the ages and reached our ears—the message which thrills us the more in proportion as we are able to grasp its meaning. First a single angel appeared to the shepherds and allayed their fears, saying, "Fear not; behold I bring you good tidings." It would appear that fear is one of the dominating impulses of the human mind, especially in conjunction with any revelations from the Lord. Men realize -- even the best of the race -- that they are imperfect and that the Almighty and his laws are perfect. Instinctively the world seems to realize that a curse or condemnation of the Almighty rests upon it, and instinctively it fears a further curse and further condemnation, realizing its continual and increasing sinfulness. The same is true today with all except the comparatively few who are well informed respecting the divine character and plan. Thus the subject of religion is generally obnoxious to the world in general -- a subject which they prefer to avoid, because of a feeling of guilt and a dread of further knowledge and condemnation.

It is for the true children of God today, as it was for the angels at that time, to assure the world that God is better than all their fears -- that God so loved the world as to redeem them from the just sentence of death, the curse that came upon all as inheritors of Adam's imperfection and sentence.

"Good tidings" is another translation of our word "gospel." How beautiful the thought that the Gospel is really and truly good tidings. Alas, for the misrepresentations of God's plan, under which so many of his professed people misrepresent his character and his Word, and apply the term "gospel" to their various messages from the dark ages, teaching purgatory and eternal torment as the portion of the race. Let us get away from this false thought and get the truth that the Gospel is good tidings. The angel elaborated, saying that his message was good tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people. Ah, thank God, his plan is wider and deeper and higher and grander than anything we have ever conceived. The Gospel message is not merely to be good tidings to the comparatively few that now have ears to hear and *eyes* to see its beauties, but in God's due time it is to be good tidings of great joy to all people.

As every member of Adam's race shared in his fall and in the curse of death which came upon him as a result, so every member of the race was included in the great redemptive sacrifice which our Lord Jesus offered and which was finished at Calvary. God's plan in Christ, as it is being worked out and shall ultimately be accomplished, will mean great joy for all people, and the tidings of this were given at the very moment of our Lord's birth, because he was the one through whom all the glorious things of the divine purpose and plan shall ultimately be accomplished.

THE CAUSE, THE LOGIC, OF THE MESSAGE

The message took cognizance of the fact that it was to reasonable people, who would want to know why the unchangeable God, who had once pronounced a curse, should at any time so amend and alter matters as to supplant the curse with a blessing. The messenger states the

philosophy of the divine plan, "Unto you is born this day, a Savior, which is Christ [Messiah] the Lord." There we have the key to the entire Gospel statement of how God could be just and yet be the justifier of sinners who accept Jesus. The word "Savior" here signifies life-giver, and how beautiful is the thought that as death is the wage of sin, the curse upon the race, this Messiah who was born is to be the one who will rescue the race from the sentence by giving them life again. The explanation of how he would give life was not given, nor was it necessary at that time; but now, in the light of developments, and with the explanations furnished through the spirit in the New Testament, we see how that our Lord's voluntary sacrifice of his life, dying the just for the unjust, settled the claims of divine justice against Adam and thus incidentally against all who shared his sentence.

Truly the more we see of the divine plan for our salvation, which began to take shape in the birth of Jesus, the more we feel like shouting with the angelic choir praises to the God of heaven, thankfulness for his mercy to the children of men. It mattered not that the babe born in Bethlehem was the Savior only in prospect, that he could not even be anointed to do his work until he reached manhood's estate thirty years later; it mattered not that even then it would be necessary for him to lay down his life gradually through three and a half years of his earthly ministry, to be finished at Calvary; it mattered not either that the resurrection was still three days after that, and his ascension forty days later, and that the blessing in general would be deferred for nearly nineteen centuries thereafter. As the angels could sing and rejoice at the first budding of the divine plan of salvation, so also can all who have faith in the ultimate outcome rejoice with joy unspeakable and give praise to God in the highest and to his Son our Lord.

Although nearly nineteen centuries have rolled away since that angelic message was delivered, it has not yet been fulfilled except in a limited measure by faith to those who have the eye of faith and the ears of faith, in all a "little flock." But the tidings of great misery for- nearly all people have been spread abroad in the name of Christ, much to the discredit of the divine plan and to the dishonor of the divine character. Instead of carrying joy the message has very generally carried grief and sorrow, especially to the kindhearted and more generously disposed. Indeed we may say that no message of the Lord Jesus, either true or false, has ever reached all people. Even today, after nineteen centuries of propaganda, only a comparatively small portion of the human family have ever heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved -- "nor is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).

What, then, shall we say of the salvation which is come to those who have truly accepted Christ as their Savior, and who are today rejoicing in him as such, and who by faith are seeing the salvation of God begun in their own hearts and yet to be fully accomplished under the whole heavens? This the Apostle calls the salvation by hope. His words are, "We are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24). We are not saved actually; we are still surrounded by sin, pain, sighing, crying, and dying; the curse is not yet rolled away. All that the best of the Lord's people have received is salvation by hope, by faith. Yet this anticipation of the future salvation, of the resurrection from the dead, of a participation in the glory, honor, and immortality of the divine nature promised to the faithful, is so strong, so clear, that those who possess it are enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even in the midst of trials and difficulties and weaknesses and unfavorable conditions incident to the curse which still rests upon the race.

A PROPHECY OF GOOD THINGS

Yes, the angelic message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church of the world during the Millennial Age. The Church is to have the first blessing. The first resurrection is to be composed only of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the Millennium, the thousand years in which Satan shall be bound,, and when the good influences of truth and righteousness shall enlighten the whole earth. The declaration of the Scriptures is that the deliverance of the Church will come early in the morning of that Millennial day, as the Prophet declares, "God will help her early in the morning" (Psalm 46:5).

But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the Gospel set before us who now see, who now believe, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and to provide a blessing for every member of Adam's race through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

It will be during the Millennial Age that this prophecy of the angel will have its fulfillment, and the great Savior who has already redeemed us by his sacrifice will stand forth as the King, the glorified Messiah, and establish his dominion of righteousness in the world for the blessing and uplifting of every member of the race. In harmony with the words of the Apostle, those will be times of refreshing, "times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21). If the Lord had based the hope of the world upon some works of merit or righteousness of the world's doing, then indeed we might have feared -- indeed the more we know of the world, the less hope we would have. But, on the contrary, the Lord has based the entire proposition for the future blessing, not upon our worthiness, but upon the worthiness and sacrifice of his Son -- to you is born a life-giver, which is Messiah the Lord.

How it adds to our enjoyment of the coming age blessings to know that the trials and difficulties of this present Gospel age are subject to the divine supervision in the interest of the little flock that is now being gathered in advance from amongst men-the "elect," the Church. We see how the present trials and difficulties are the chiselings and polishings necessary to our development in the fruits and graces of the holy spirit in the character-likeness of God's dear Son, our Lord, our Hope, our Bridegroom. How joyful the thought that soon the elect number called from the world to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, will be completed and enter into her glory. How precious the thought that then they shall be privileged with their Lord and Master to extend the divine favor of blessing and uplift to the world. What higher honor or privilege or blessing could possibly come to any?

It was after the giving of the message of good tidings and great joy by the heavenly one that a host of angels appeared to the shepherds, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." This, too, is a prophecy. It is not yet true, but will be fulfilled in every particular in God's due time, which we believe is now nigh, even at the door. Not yet does God receive glory in the highest, not yet is there peace amongst men. Quite to the contrary. God's name is blasphemed, not only by those who vulgarly and in ribald jest take the divine name in vain, and not merely by the heathen who worship devils and think they are gods, but even by Christian people God's name is blasphemed every day. For be it known that blasphemy is any dishonorable misrepresentation of another. God be merciful to us, for at some time or other every one of us doubtless has blasphemed the holy name in this manner -- by misrepresenting the divine character and divine plan, by picturing the God of love and mercy and justice and truth as the originator, the planner, the perpetuator of the eternal torment of the great mass of his creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, born to sin as the sparks to fly upward.

But the Lord had mercy upon us because we did it ignorantly. And we also should have compassion upon others who still ignorantly misrepresent our God, and our energies should be continually bent to

their assistance, that the eyes of their understanding might open more widely to perceive the lengths and breadths and heights and depths and know the love of God which passeth understanding.

Noting that peace on earth and good will to men have not followed the Savior's birth thus far, and discerning that this is a prophecy of what is to be accomplished during the Millennium, many have been inclined to change the translation of this verse so as to have it read, "On earth peace amongst men, in whom he is well pleased." However, by thus changing it the statement would not be true, for even the Lord's people have no peace on earth. Whatever peace they have is in their hearts, and based upon their faith in the Lord and in the glorious things which he has promised. Our Lord himself and the Apostles testified to this, assuring us that whosoever in this present time would live godly should suffer persecution, that a man's foes would be they of his own household, etc. (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:26). Let us not confuse ourselves, nor abridge the testimony of the Word, but with the eye of faith look forward to the day of Christ in which all these glorious things shall have their fulfillment, in which peace shall indeed fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, bringing divine favor and rolling away the curse from the entire groaning creation, as pointed out by the Apostle.

Not even with the inauguration of the Millennium will this prophecy be fulfilled: not until its close, when the human family shall have been lifted by the Kingdom regulations out of sin, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death, up, up to all that was lost in Adam - not until then will there indeed be glory to God in the highest, not until then will there be peace amongst men. Nor are we to understand that the entire race will be appreciative of the divine love and favor even after they have fully seen the righteousness of God in Christ manifested. On the contrary, the Scriptures seem to clearly teach that there will be a class who will then prove unfit for life eternal, unappreciative of the divine favor, and it is with pleasure that we learn that all such shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death. Thus eventually, by the close of the Millennium, Satan and all wilful wrongdoers having been destroyed, the time will come as declared in the Scriptures when all voices in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall be heard praising God, him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb forever and ever. Hosanna! Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good will to men! will be the final shout of a redeemed race when the great plan of salvation shall have been fully outworked according to the divine plan set forth in the Scriptures.

- *C. T. Russell*

World Shaking Events

A meditation in Psalm 46.

THERE is a growing conviction in the minds of thoughtful people that the days in which we live are marked by an atmosphere of finality. For some time we have been living in a new era -- one distinct, not only from pre-1914, but from pre-1938 days; an era which might well be called the atomic era.

In his remarkable forecast of the conditions which would obtain at the close of the Gospel Age, our Lord Jesus predicted that there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26.) And surely there has never been a time when conditions resembled his forecast more accurately than today.

Christians in these days, however, need not be in darkness as to the meaning of the past fifty or sixty eventful years, but, through a knowledge of The Divine Plan, and a daily renewal of their consecration vows, are permitted to occupy an enlightened, privileged position. Such was the Psalmist's calm confidence, as, under inspiration of God's holy spirit, he penned the forty-sixth psalm. Though written, in all probability, to celebrate the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion planned by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah (Isaiah 37) there is little doubt that it has a prophetic significance -- meeting its larger fulfillment in our day. On this psalm, Luther based his famous hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God." Let us study it carefully and prayerfully, that the reassurance the Lord intends us to obtain therefrom may be ours.

Scholars have pointed out that it consists of three strophes, the conclusion of each being marked by the *Selah*, and that of the last two by the refrain.

STROPHE No. 1

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.*

In his *Studies in the Psalms*, the spirit of Psalm 46 is summed up by *Rotherham* as being "that of stouthearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when the *moun.tains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations."

Another writer of note, *J. J. Stewart Perowne*, commenting on its *primary* application, submits the following interesting and instructive paragraph:

This and the two following Psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrate the same event, the sudden and

miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. That proud host had swept the land. City after city had fallen into the power of the conqueror. The career of Sennacherib and his captains had been one uninterrupted success. The capital itself alone held out, and even there the enfeebled garrison seemed little likely to make a successful resistance. The swollen river had, in the language of the prophet, overflowed all his channels, and risen even to the neck. It was at this crisis that deliverance came. When there were no succours to be expected, when neither king nor army could help the city, God helped her. He, the Lord of Hosts, was in the midst of her, keeping watch over her walls and defending her towers. His Angel went forth at dead of night and smote the host of the Assyrians, and when men awoke in the morning, there reigned in that vast camp the silence and the stillness of death. Such a deliverance must have filled the whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of Prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their King. Her towers, her palaces, the temple of her God, stood in all their beauty, saved by a miracle from the spoiler's hand. God had made Himself known there as a sure refuge, and henceforth His Name would be acknowledged in the earth.

As we come to study the psalm ourselves, it is easy to see that much of its language is figurative. In Bible symbology the word "earth" denotes an "order of society." The psalmist sees such an order of society "removed," (or "changed," RSV). Evidently the scene which the inspired poet seeks to convey to our minds is that of an earthquake, (though the "*land*" should "*roar*" - *Rotherham*) as the result of which, a great change takes place in the form of society. The present heavens and earth are envisioned as being replaced by a new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13.) Moreover the new earth, according to Hab. 2:14, is to be filled with the knowledge of God.

Again, the word "mountains" represents kingdoms. In Isa. 2:2 the prophet informs us

"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills," evidently a reference to the time when Christ shall reign. (See also Micah 4:1.) Again, as illustrating the use of figurative language to describe *the changes now taking place in every strata of society, throughout the world*, note the words of Isaiah in 40:4:

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

This great leveling process, thus predicted by Isaiah, is the very theme portrayed in our psalm.

STROPHE No. 2

*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy places of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

In the first strophe, the fact that these catastrophes of nature are intended as symbols is not specifically stated. The psalmist doubtless assumes that his readers will understand such an elementary matter. But in the second strophe he applies these natural catastrophes. (Psa. 46:6.) He shows them to be symbols of nations. And his point may easily be that, if we are able to trust in God, who is able to control the mighty forces of nature, should we not also be able to trust in him, as he deals with the mighty forces of kings and peoples? He is just as able to control them. They may, and doubtless do, seem powerful enough to us, but to him they are but as "the small dust of the balance . . . all nations before him are as nothing." - Isa. 40:15-17. Remembering this, we shall be able to repose in him, and be at peace in our hearts.

However, before reaching Psa. 45:6, the psalmist has a word of peace to speak to the Lord's true followers in Psa. 46:4 and Psa. 46:5. His first word concerns a river-the river of truth and grace, the streams of which bring rest, peace, comfort. To those who, by faith and consecration, have entered into covenant relationship with God, and have been given the spirit of sonship-to such is granted the peace of God, which passeth understanding. (Phil. 4:7.) In the Millennial Age, at the threshold of which we stand today, these streams will flow out as a river. Meantime, as rivulets they refresh and stimulate all those who are walking in the narrow way.

Such refreshment of spirit comes to us particularly in connection with increased understanding of our Father's word -- and conscious determination, by his grace, to bring our lives ever more completely into line with his will for us. Thus, understanding his plans, and watching them mature, even granted the privilege of being co-laborers with him in some small measure, we find ourselves realizing the "help" promised in verse 5; which help we confidently expect to have continued to us, until our resurrection change, "*right early*," or, as *Rotherham* translates: "*at the approach of the morning*."

The word "tabernacles," in Psa. 46:4, is in the plural, which is puzzling, until one learns that it is an instance where the figure of speech known as the *plural of majesty* is employed. This plural, whenever it occurs, simply means that "great" or "much" or some similar adjective is to be understood as added to the noun. In this case, not two or more tabernacles, but one very great tabernacle is the thought; not great in size, but in glory or importance.

In our study of *Tabernacle Shadows*, we have learned, not only that God dwelleth between the cherubims (Isa. 37:16; Psa. 80:1), but that during our time here we are to live in a condition represented by the "holy" of the tabernacle. There it is that we find ourselves enjoying the light which comes from the golden candlestick; being nourished by the bread of presence; and worshipping daily at the golden altar. Here is the source of our strength, the source of our growth and development as new creatures in Christ Jesus; and so long as we continue in the holy we are immune to the fears of the world. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High [i.e., in the holy, in the condition of consecration], shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.)

The further word of Psa. 46:5, that "God is in the midst of her," is surely one that brings a sense of strength and security. It suggests, too, the true basis of Christian unity. As with the nation of Israel under Moses, Jehovah was in the center of each encampment, directing its affairs and resolving differences, so, only in a much higher and grander sense, is he the center of affairs in connection with spiritual Israel, leading them onward to final victory. The thought that our Father directs the experiences of us each, and that nothing occurs in our lives without his knowledge and permission - and without him being alongside to help - is very precious to us; surely one which proves most heartening to us, as we recall it from time to time during the days of our pilgrimage.

Moreover, the psalmist's additional assurance in this verse (Psa. 46:5) ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed. He says that, because God is in the midst of her -- the Church -- "she shall not be moved." Other kingdoms great and small shall be, but not her. We, the church, are on our way to receive "a kingdom which *cannot be moved*." (Heb. 12:28.) Early in the morning of the Millennial Day we have been helped and strengthened by our Father, guided through the complexities of this life, shown his plan, and preserved from the snares and pitfalls of the Adversary. And soon the journey will have ended! How delighted are we at the prospect! -- not alone because it will bring our own deliverance, but also because the opportunity will be extended to all mankind to be set free from the thralldom of sin and death. Surely this kingdom for which we have so long prayed: "Thy Kingdom Come," is the "desire of all nations" spoken of by Haggai (Hag. 2:7), although the nations do not now realize it.

In Psa. 46:6 the psalmist reminds us that, whereas the nations have roared, and the kingdoms have staggered, nevertheless, when *God* speaks, his voice is bound to be heard and obeyed. Louder than the roar of nations is the voice of God. At the sound of *his* voice, the earth (the order of society) melts. The words of the psalmist here find an echo in 2 Pet. 3:10:

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But Peter does not stop there. He has an encouraging word a little further on, in Psa. 46:13 "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. "

STROPHE No. 3

*Come, behold the works of the Lord,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

Are Wars to Cease? -- One of our free booklets bears this title. In it the position is developed, from the scriptures, that wars *will cease*. Psalm 46:9 of our psalm declares that they are to cease. They will cease, because God will make them cease. They will cease, when God has permitted such desolation and horrors that those who wage wars will be compelled to stay the carnage. Just

how and when he will put an end to war, we are not wise enough to say. It surely must be very soon, or the entire race of mankind will be destroyed. When he *does* say "Cease," he will do so in such manner that all *will know* that the one speaking is God, and that he must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*.

Something of these sentiments must have been in the mind of the poet (Lord Byron) when he penned those famous lines on "The Destruction of Sennacherib," reprinted below.

The psalmist concludes with the familiar benediction: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Here, once again, we are reminded of the infinite power whereby God can subdue the entire universe unto himself; reminded also of the fatherly love revealed in his word. Knowing that both his power and love are ever combined on our behalf, our hearts may well respond in those noble lines of Luther

"A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper he amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing."

- *A. L. Muir.*

The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

The Wages of Sin

"In Adam all die. " - 1 Cor. 15:22.

THE Holy Scriptures claim to be the repository of positive truth, divinely inspired. To accept their testimony is to enter a direct road to knowledge independent of rational thought; one requiring, moreover, the rigid exclusion of human philosophies and speculations, for

*"God is his own interpreter
And he will make it plain."*

The necessity for this course becomes obvious from the opening page of the Bible, for its account of man's creation is diametrically opposed to the popularly accepted Evolution theory. There can be no compromise. We who accept the Bible as God's inspired Word must follow the principle expressed by St. Paul: "Let God be true though every man be false." (Rom. 3:4, R.S.V.) We reject, further, the modern well-meaning effort to reconcile the Bible and evolutionary Biology, by an allegorizing of the Edenic story. No writer of true history would mix plain matter of fact with allegory in the same continued narrative, without some intimation of a transition from one to the other. If the man Adam be accounted allegorical, so must be the woman Eve; and so the garden, the trees, the rivers, the animals, etc. Continuing up the scale of creation, we must allegorize the earth and the heaven-thus reaching an obviously absurd conclusion. This attempted interpretation solves no problem, and we are brought back to the inescapable choice-man is either a fortuitous development from lowly protoplasm, or originally a perfect and direct creation of Divine fiat.

God says: "I have made the earth and created man upon it. " - Isa. 45:12.

The Genesis account specifically states -- " In the image of God created he him." And this thought of man's original perfection of being, is borne out by the context, which declares that God looked upon his creature with approval, seeing him to be "very good." It is borne out also by the general testimony of Scripture respecting God as a Master workman -- "His work is *perfect*." (Deut. 32: 4.) It is borne out by the statement of the Psalmist, "Thou madest him [man, Adam] a little lower than the angels thou crownedst him with glory and with honor [his moral likeness to his Creator]; thou didst set him over the works of thy hands," -- the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, and the fowl of heaven" and didst make him ruler over them all " -- giving to man the dominion of the earth, with its lower orders of creation, in the likeness of God's dominion over heavenly things. (Psa. 8:6, 7.) It is borne out again by the statement of the Wise Man, that God made man *upright*, but he sought out many inventions and *defiled himself*. - Eccl. 7:29.

Furthermore, Adam is termed a "son of God" (Luke 3:38); an expression Scripturally restricted to angelic beings, to Jesus, and to his footstep followers, justified through faith and led of God's spirit.

Additionally, the historicalness of the account of Adam and Eve is attested to by Jesus, who quoted from Genesis 1:27 and Gen. 2:24 in these words: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? " - Matt. 19:4, 5.

Finally, there are the multitudinous references from Genesis to Revelation to the pivotal truth of all Scripture -- the *redemptive* sacrifice of Christ-a doctrine positively confirming Adam's original perfection and subsequent "fall."

We conclude therefore, that the record concerning the first man and woman is neither allegory nor fable, but a literal, historical fact set forth and emphasized through figures of speech to intensify its truthful realities.

THE DIVINE COMMAND

Following the account of Adam's creation, the narrative continues:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." - Gen. 2:8, 9, 15-17.

We note the simple facts: the provisions of a loving Creator for his noble creature's welfare in trees of life-bearing fruit suitable to the perpetuation of human life; the forbiddance (probably temporary only) of but one tree; and the extremeness of the penalty. Before the perfect man is now set a test of obedience.

We are to think of Adam as perfect in the sense of being mentally and morally fashioned after the likeness of the Creator--well poised, well balanced--not prone to sin "as the sparks fly upward," as he subsequently became, and as the children now are. We are not, however, to think of him as perfect in knowledge or in character. Knowledge must be acquired, but he was fully equipped with all the mental and moral apparatus for a rapid acquirement of knowledge. As for character, in an intelligent being it is a fixity of the will; and such a fixity can come only with knowledge. In other words, the perfect Adam was ready to acquire perfect knowledge, and had a perfect Creator, able and willing to give him the requisite instruction; and as this right instruction would be received, and this perfect knowledge be attained, character (good or bad) would be established -- either in favor of the principles of righteousness already established by God, or in opposition to the will of God, in unrighteousness.

We are not to think of Adam's condition and trial as an experiment on God's part, the result of which would be doubtful; but, on the contrary, we are to remember that the results were fully known to the Almighty before the trial began, and that he saw the end of his work from the beginning (Acts 15:18), else he would never have undertaken it. Divine foreknowledge is conceded by a large proportion of professing Christians who, nevertheless, are sadly confused by certain false theories which imply that the Almighty's foreknowledge was to the effect that the vast majority of the posterity of Adam would spend an eternity in most horrible suffering, and that God prepared the arrangement for their suffering in advance of their creation. This view is untenable amongst those who combine any measure of knowledge of God's character with any measure of reasoning ability. The Scriptures show conclusively that God had a much more just, reasonable and loving plan than that --that he foresaw beneficent results before creating our first parents.

There are two methods of giving and receiving instruction. One through precept and example; the other through experience. Man was not the first of the intelligent creatures--previously God had

created many higher orders-angels, cherubim, principalities, and powers. (Romans 8:38; Eph. 3:10, etc.) These had all been instructed by good *precepts*; they had not had instruction through *example*, except on the side of good example: they had no illustration of evil and its pernicious consequences. That they antedated man is revealed in the remarkable words addressed to Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the *morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*" (Job 38:4-7.) These celestial spectators beheld with wonder and praise the operation of divine wisdom and power in the work of the creative "days." But the angelic host did not know that upon this planet was to unfold a mighty drama which would reveal for all eternity two other wonderful attributes of God -- justice and love. For the divine purpose was to bring into being a new order of creature -- humanity -- whose instruction, it was fore-arranged, should be along the lines of *experience*, which would add to the instruction of God's angelic creatures by way of giving them an example of sin and its consequences, and of the divine attitude toward sin and toward sinners. The permission of evil -- its eventual removal and the means used thereto -- constitutes the great theme of the Bible.

When God's wonderful Plan of the Ages is understood, everything in nature and in experience bears testimony to the overruling of his providence. The heavens declare his glory and the earth showeth his handiwork -- all speak of an intelligent designer, wisely adapting means to good and benevolent ends, and ministering to the necessities of his intelligent creatures. Every leaf and every sunbeam bears to the thoughtful a loving message of divine care. And every inharmony of nature, when viewed in the light of God's plan, is seen to be but a part of that great process whereby God is preparing for the perfect order of things which shall continue forever, when sin and its entailments shall have been banished under the successful reign of Christ; and even the long permitted wrath of man and Satan will eventually be to God's praise.

Therefore, in considering Adam's trial, we first observe that since God is good, all his providences must be with a view to wise and benevolent ends, either near or remote; and secondly, that since he made man in his own image -- morally free -- and with the alternatives of good and evil before him, it would be contrary to his purpose, thus manifested, to so hedge him about with his providences as to interfere with his moral free-agency, which is the crowning glory of humanity, and the right exercise of which gives to virtue all its worth.

DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS PENALTY

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." - Gen. 3:1-6.

The characters in this high tragedy are all worthy the grandeur of the occasion. They are Jehovah; a fallen rebel of the spiritual universe; and man, an earthly image of God. The test-act of the occasion, too -- however men of low conceptions have sneered at it--was equal to the character of the parties in grandeur and dignity. It was indeed the simple taste of fruit; but that tasting an act of deliberate disobedience to Him whose law is perfect.

It is with no cloudy vagueness that the personal existence of the spirit of evil is revealed in Holy Scripture. In history, prophecy, and in parable is the Tempter brought before us, and every quality, every action, every attribute which can indicate personality, is referred to him in language which cannot be explained away. The records of the old dispensation and the writings of the new, alike depict him as preeminent in power among the angels who lost their first estate (Jude 6), and as ever compassing the destruction of men. As God is called "the holy one," so Satan is called "the evil one." He is the oldest sinner (1 John 3:8); the greatest sinner (Eph. 6:12); and the father of sin. (John 8:44.) In 2 Cor. 11:3, St. Paul gives us a plain, historic version of the beguiling of Eve; and in Rev. 12:9, we read of the great dragon, "that old serpent, the devil and Satan." We, then, are neither wise nor prudent to talk of allegories, or rhetorical personification, or in bolder unbelief to doubt or deny the existence and the power of the chief of fallen spirits. It were far wiser to recognize our foe, and to seek the strength with which to contend with him.

The fact of original sin presents nothing strange, nothing obscure; it consists essentially in disobedience to the will of God, which will is the moral law for man. This disobedience, the sin of Adam, is an act committed everywhere and every day, arising from the same causes, marked by the same characters, and attended by the same consequences as Holy Scripture assigns to it. It is the way of man -- from God to self and independence. There is first the subtle questioning of God's love; the suggestion that his commandment is merely arbitrary, imposed by power. Love being doubted, truth is next assailed and God is treated as a liar. God's love and truth being denied, the next step is to take his place openly. God has quite lost his character in the heart of man, and self now seeks to be "as God." Thus is spiritual perception destroyed when God is doubted.

St. Paul declares that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." (1 Tim. 2:14.) Mother Eve's involvement in transgression was wholly apart from her husband's knowledge or complicity; and he, when he learned of her course, was so full of sympathy and so full of love for her, that his affection quite overcame his proper sense of duty toward God. Concluding that his wife's disobedience had forfeited her life, and that the result to him would mean everlasting loss of her companionship, he deliberately chose to be with his companion in sin rather than to be separated from her: therefore he ate knowingly, to share her penalty -- he suicided. He chose the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore.

"Unto Adam the Lord God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*" - Gen. 3 17-19.

Here in direct and forceful simplicity the penalty for disobedience to God is stated to be a return to the previous condition of non-existence. In the words of Paul: "The wages of sin is death." And again: "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by [as a result of] sin: and so death passed upon all men, in that all are sinners [inheritors of their father Adam's blemishes]." - Rom. 6:23; 5:12, 19.

How strange it seems that this simple Genesis narrative, which contains not a word respecting eternal torment, should be made the basis of all the fears which have tormented millions of Christian believers respecting a future of unutterable woe entailed upon Father Adam, and through him upon his race. How simple the statement of the Lord respecting what the penalty would be -- *death*; margin, "dying thou shalt die." How fully this is in agreement with the

experiences which have been upon the race for now six thousand years -- dying they have died to the number of something like twenty thousand millions. We would not make light of the original sin; we would have it appear in its full force as a deliberate, willful disobedience of the divine command; and yet we assert with all confidence that no reasonable mind can find anything in this language indicating eternal torment as being the wages of sin. How could any reasonable mind admit that if eternal torment had been threatened it would have been *a just* penalty for the crime mentioned -- disobedience in the eating of forbidden fruit?

If to some it may at first appear that death is not a severe sentence, not a manifestation of divine wrath, not a curse, let them reflect further. Let them note how all of the dying processes are only parts of death, and that as insane asylums mark those who become mentally dead before they are physically dead; and as hospitals mark those who become physically decrepit before they are mentally decrepit; and as prisons mark those who become morally dead or decrepit before they are physically dead; so all of the experiences of our race, "groaning and travailing in pain together," mark "death working in us. " All sicknesses, pains, and sorrows are parts of the dying process *in* the human family. The "curse" or sentence of death has resulted in blighted hopes and loves and ambitions, and is rapidly placing the entire race in the great prison house of death-the grave. Surely, the true penalty of sin was a heavy one, though we must admit it was a just one. Surely, it involved all of the race of Adam in the most natural manner, because all of his children are partakers of his sentence; because sharers in his weaknesses, his imperfection, resulting from his transgression of the divine law. How unutterably tragic the lot of the human race if this present life were their only and final portion. Thank God for the golden promise of the Holy Scriptures -- a glorious restitution age under the reign of Messiah -- a promise summed up in the Apostle's words in 1 Cor. 15:21, 22

"For since by man death,
By man also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die,
Even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

- *W. J. Siekman.*

Going Home

"So shall we ever be with the Lord." - 1 Thess. 4:17.

THE word *home* has been included among the finest words in our language. Indeed, someone once said that the three very sweetest words are God, Mother, and Home. Well, that was one man's idea. There are other exceedingly precious words, such as Jesus, Salvation, Faith, Hope, Mercy, Love. But we are willing to admit the value of Home. When Madam Albani as an encore sang "Home, Sweet Home" in London, England, it was said that there were few dry eyes in the audience. The great word *home* strikes a chord deep down in the human heart.

How the Christian thinks of home on the great sea of human life, when the foam-crested waves mount up toward heaven and a thousand perils seem about to spring upon him! And why should he not think of his heavenly home? Many have thought of it and have thereby felt an inspiration that has assisted them in making good. Jesus thought of it, and we are told that he "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." Just how much he remembered of that former joy we are not told, but that he kept his eye on the goal before him there can be no question. And, furthermore, he held out the prospect of future bliss to his disciples, saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions:... I go to prepare a place for you. And . . . I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). How many weary pilgrims on life's rugged road have been cheered and encouraged by the music that has entered into their hearts from this mighty promise made by the Son of God.

We are not home yet. Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. And "we know that if the house of this earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We should be getting ready for this heavenly home. We have been placed here to gain the necessary character development. The chief purpose of what we call the truth is to enable us to become acquainted with the Mighty One of the universe, and to establish connections between him and ourselves. Every point of truth gained, therefore, should lift us to a higher level, making us more Godlike.

And just what is the character of God? According to the Bible it is love, and divine love has been said to be broader than the measure of man's mind, and the heart of God to be wonderfully kind. Well, we have been trying to gauge and measure his love. A great many persons in so-called Christendom have set forth written or unwritten creeds, most of them having pretty high fences around them, and in these credal enclosures they have placed (as they suppose) the love and the wisdom of God.

But some of us feel that the love of God cannot be thus circumscribed. God may be giving his favor to some who cannot see all points of doctrine exactly as we see them, or who express their belief in different terms. They cannot say "Shibboleth," and so they do the best they can and say, "Sibboleth." The question then is, should we condemn them for doing this and judge them as being virtually out of the truth? (Judges 12:6).

And another question is, should doctrines be to us stumbling stones or stepping stones? There is nothing that can make a person so narrow-minded and intolerant as religion if received in a sectarian way. Just think of the millions of persons who have been slain in the name of Christ. The knowledge of this fact should make us all very humble before the Lord, lest we be found in the company of persecutors of the saints. Of course, we would not want to be found in such

company, but Satan is very artful, and if he can get us to judge others, doubtless he feels very much pleased with his success.

OUR HOME QUALITIES

The fact is that we should be developing home qualities if we expect to reach our heavenly home. We should be learning to live with all those who love ' the Lord, in peace, in charity, and in goodwill. There will be no judging among us in heaven. Then why should there be judging among us here on earth? Why judge any man when we cannot read his heart? God judges according to motives. How many little points in the Bible has God left undetermined and therefore debatable simply for the purpose of testing our love. Do we deserve a lot of credit for loving those who agree with us in everything? Surely not; for such "yes" people are but the shadows of ourselves. Is it not a fact that some go about looking for their own mental reflection in all whom they meet? Such persons might just as well look in a mirror. It is often persons who do not see things just as we do who are the most helpful to us, for they are more broadening to our minds.

Now then, do we want to be narrow or broad? The world has two general classes conservatives and liberals. One finds them everywhere, even among Bible students. But did not Jesus say that the way is narrow? Yes, but in what sense? In the sense that it bars out the world, the flesh, and the devil, but not in the sense that it bars out other Christians who are living up to the best they know and are seeking any enlightenment that God may have for them.

How many of us will reach our heavenly home? All the Christlike ones will be there. How little Jesus had to say along the technical lines of doctrine, but he had much to say about faith in himself, and about love, for he interpreted the entire Decalogue in terms of love.

THE VALUE OF DOCTRINE

But doctrine is valuable -- just in so far as it makes us Christlike. It has no value in itself as an abstract entity. Does it warm up our hearts with a strong and ardent appreciation of the Master? Does it cause us to manifest greater kindness toward the brethren? If so, it is accomplishing its divine purpose. If on the other hand it is making us narrow, conservative, select, and selfish, then it has failed of its purpose, for we have not been using it in the right way. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). And why? Because he lacks the home spirit, the spirit of love for other members of God's chosen family.

God has set the members in the Body as it bath pleased him, not as it bath pleased us. Oh yes, it is a fact that some of them do not appeal to us. If we had the selection of them perhaps they would not be in the Body at all. Being out of harmony with our own mental tendencies, these brethren jar against us. But God did not want a lot of people just alike, or those who would see things exactly alike. But does not the Word say that God's people will see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion? Yes, and they will do just that when this prophecy is fulfilled. And even that does not mean that they will see all things exactly alike, but they will see all the main things alike. And the wise virgins will make the types of the Old Testament conform to the teaching of the New, and not try to twist the New Testament to make it fit the Old Testament types.

There will be some wonderful surprises in connection with our going home. Probably some will be there whom we considered heterodox and not fit to preach the Gospel while on earth. So we did not vote for them as elders or teachers, although they possessed ability to teach and preach, and their lives were unimpeachable from the standpoint of rectitude. But on some purely

technical point of the Scriptures they did not coincide with our views, so we ruled them out. But the question arises that, if we acted in the aforesaid manner, shall we be there ourselves? It would seem not. This business of being a Christian is a serious matter. We do not dare to repudiate our responsibility to the other members of the Body.

There are times in our experience, perchance, when we fancy ourselves on the verge of the broad ocean of eternity. Ere long the tide will come in and pick up our frail barque and carry us far away. But the stars will be there to guide us, and one glorious orb will outshine them all, and that will be the bright and morning Star. And oft we find ourselves thinking of the ones whom we expect to meet in our heavenly home -- the great Father and his Son Jesus, and a glittering throng of tried and faithful ones. Oh, loyalty, faith, and love will have achieved their crowning victory in that blessed morning when the portals of heaven open to receive us and we "answer to his call."

When we go Home,
Shall the broad sea lie all at rest,
Or shall the breakers roar
With riot of the deep,
Scorning the voice of sleep;
And thus 'mid billowy sound
Shall we go Home?

It matters not.
That going Home will be the same.
The virgins will be there.
God's loved, the true, the tried,
Bound for the other side,
In robes of light divine,
Shall meet us in the air.
When we go Home,

I think the ocean's mighty roar
Shall melt away in peace
To lullaby of foam;
And heaven's gold shall glow
In the vast vault, and so,
Born in eternity,
We shall go Home.

- Walter Sargeant

Entered Into Rest

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