

SPIRITICITY, February 1957

THE SCRIPTURE AS SYMBOL

By Robert Applegate

In our treatment of Scripture in metaphysics, we frequently use it symbolically: as, for example, when we say that the escape of the Israelites from Egypt represents the freeing of the individual consciousness from its slavery to materialism. But there is nothing new about this approach to the Bible. Paul said of the story of Sarah and Hagar, "This is an allegory." And Saint Augustine declared that the Old Testament was repellent to him until he learned to interpret it spiritualiter: i.e., symbolically.

There is nothing arbitrary about the symbolic interpretation of Scripture; for everything in the outer world of phenomena is a reflection, and therefore a visible representation, of a movement in consciousness. Sir Arthur Eddington, in his summary of the position of modern science, writes:

"The symbolic nature of the entities of physics is generally recognized; and the scheme of physics is now formulated in such a way as to make it almost self-evident that it is a partial aspect of something wider. . . .

"Recognizing that the physical world is entirely abstract and without 'actuality' apart from its linkage to consciousness, we restore consciousness to the fundamental position instead of representing it as an inessential complication occasionally found in the midst of inorganic nature at a late stage of evolutionary history."

All events in the phenomenal world (whether we approach them through the avenue of the study of nature, history, or science) are symbols: visible representations of unseen events, which we call "causes" or "laws." These unseen laws are universal; they operate alike in nations and individuals, in stars and atoms.

There is therefore (to return to our example) a close parallel between the escape of the Israelites from their bondage to the Egyptians and the escape of the individual soul from its bondage to materialism. The same causes are at work, and the outer events (the flight, the trek across the desert, etc.) are evidences, and therefore symbols, of the causes.

All history is symbolic; and therefore the history of the Israelites, who more than any other people sought and worshipped the One God, is symbolic of the inner experiences of any individual who likewise seeks and worships this same One God. The Bible is mainly concerned with this history of the Hebrew people. The Old Testament chronicles their experiences prior to the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament tells of this coming of the Christ and the effects that it produced. All the chronicled events, which occurred in the outer world, represent activities that take place in the consciousness of everyone of us, as we find Truth and either reject It or follow It.

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ARE YOUR TENSIONS SHOWING?

By Nell Truesdell

A movie celebrity stated to a columnist that he cannot quit work because he is supposed to have all the money that another actor has. Still another declared that he cannot quit because he now has forty horses and a boat to support. This exaggerated state of affairs is not confined to members of the theatrical set. A wild grasping after needless and useless things oppresses people in all walks of life. Unless a man can rightly evaluate his needs and intelligently direct his desires, he will be moved by pressures that will destroy his peace of mind. This is stated emphatically in the Epistle of James:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

On the home front, constantly increasing social demands are duping parents everywhere. With slim means, they indulge their children (and themselves) to keep up with their neighbors, who in similar manner are trying to keep up with them. Self-indulgence is destructive. The insatiable demands that stem from it always produce self-justification, self-righteousness.

The adult (or child) who is forced to aspire toward some achievement grows internally and experiences a satisfaction that cannot be measured in terms of things. He actually formulates what he desires out of the substance of himself; and he appreciates results because they bear witness to his capacity to be and to do. Such a reward is denied the man who reaches out with determined effort to seize for himself everything he can grasp.

It is one thing to appropriate everything in sight without regard for others; it is another to accept as free gifts the things that meet and fulfill the requirements of the hour. These come without a price tag; they satisfy.

Anxiety breeds fear; worry torments. Such stresses stem from the psychic realm, the seat of the emotions, which, at best, are flighty, rising and falling at the command of willful desire, or lust. Commotion in the psychic realm causes mental illness and bodily sickness. Too, emotional unrest displays itself in the affairs as lack, real or imagined. Prolonged belief in lack breaks down the finer forces of a man's being - unless he comes to himself, arises, and returns to God. To try to please God more than men does not drain the energies, beggar resources, nor destroy manhood.

"If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up. . . . Make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee."

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THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

By Alden Truesdell

The Declaration of Independence sets forth three gifts as man's "inalienable Rights": "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." These were not given to man by the Declaration of Independence; man already had them as gifts of God.

Man will be wise to go right to God, to consult Him regarding the use of any of His gifts. And in this use, he will find that all competition ceases. He will delight to discover that God has need of such a vessel as he.

Happiness is man's major objective. Everything that man seeks in the world, he seeks for the sake of the happiness that he thinks it will give. Man works diligently in his pursuit of happiness. He seeks security in the world, his place in society. He labors prodigiously to lay up treasure with an eye to retiring in due season and living off his accumulation. Some, having retired, find a measure of pleasure in the exercise of hobbies.

With all this conscientious pursuit of the pleasantries of life, it would seem that man should have captured, or at least isolated, happiness. The pursuit is still on, however, with happiness as elusive as ever. Something seems to have obstructed the pursuit or hidden the objective. Could it be that in this pursuit of happiness, man has gone so rapidly that his objective could not keep up with him? or that his objective might lie in another direction than that which he has been following?

Is it not entirely possible that mankind as a whole has been pursuing happiness outside and into the future, when all the time it is within and at hand. Once a man has conceded this possibility, he finds new vistas opening to his vision. He finds himself in agreement with the Psalmist, who discovered that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made." He knows why the inscription over the Greek temple was "Know Thyself." He comprehends the case of the Prodigal, who pursued happiness to the outermost realm, only to be rewarded with husks; who then came to himself, rose, and went to his father, where he was lavishly rewarded - not because he had earned or deserved a reward, but because he had returned home.

Everyone who is honest with himself knows that happiness is not found in achievement, fame, or wealth; but rather in an internal sense of well-being, in a desire to serve in some capacity, and in an anticipation - a spontaneous alertness arising from a progressive movement toward a desired goal.

Any memory of happiness is usually associated with some service rendered; for man is most happy when active in some orderly expression. A man may believe that he would like to be free from all the routine responsibilities of life; but if he were incapacitated for a period, he would be delighted to get back into living his life in the world and meeting the responsibilities of the day. The way to happiness, then, is not in escape from responsibility or service, but in a response to greater abilities and the giving of more efficacious service.

For man has familiarized himself with all the prevalent and accepted responsibilities, and has been less than completely happy. He has given

individual, family, community, national, and international service; and has come up empty, although wiser in experience. Now, if he will look back to his starting point to discover where he departed from his original quest, he may find himself turning completely around to the consideration of spiritual values and the giving of spiritual service. He may find himself accepting his spiritual responsibility and responding to his God-given ability.

If it is true - and we have it on the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God - that "the Kingdom of God is at hand" and "within," then a good place to look for happiness, or joy (or any desirable commodity) would be at hand and within. The practice of looking out into the world for satisfaction or into the future for reward must be replaced by an acceptance of such statements as: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty"; "The Joy of the Lord is your strength"; or Paul's "God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery; . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

There is a sure test offered for the wise and prudent, who want to be sure they are right before going ahead. They need only compare the report of the many who have sought happiness apart from God with the record of those who have made the God within their Source of Joy. The first report is always negative, empty, wistful; the second is always positive, vital, glowing. Those who have followed the latter path have known a joy, an ecstasy, so pure and intense that it could come only from the Source of Joy Itself.

Once the pursuer of happiness arrives at this point, he ceases to be a pursuer and becomes a partaker. He shaves in the pure Essence of Happiness. He is satisfied, because he has awaked in the image of his Creator.

The reason the words of Jesus Christ are vital is that He spoke in terms of the Reality of Life. He did not speak about Truth; He spoke Truth. And the Doctrine of Jesus Christ is not a doctrine of futurity, but a doctrine of present utility. As one studies His Teaching, he is struck by the immediacy of such statements as:

"The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

"The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life."

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

By H. B. Jeffery
(Continued from last month)

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Those who fully believe in the Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Omniscience of God, having faith in the truth that all things were made by Him and pronounced "very good" - these know that in reality there is no evil, and that what we have considered as evil must have a definite place and purpose in the Divine Economy.

In the old belief there was a saying that

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

And while we have long since dismissed the belief in a personal devil, or in any malefic power in the universe, yet we know that there is much truth involved in that old saying, because mischief is the result of a false employment or misuse of the powers inherent in man - which powers are ever demanding avenues of expression.

The idle, thoughtless person wastes his powers by allowing them to go out in useless channels and worthless pursuits. Our forces need intelligent direction in order to be of use and benefit to us and to society. The mischievous boy needs only that his splendid forces be directed into some constructive activity; and so it is with men - who are but boys grown up.

The better rendering of the word translated as "evil" is useless; and thus the Prayer is: "Deliver (or preserve) us from uselessness." In nearly every instance in the New Testament where Jesus is credited with using the words "evil" and "devil," the words useless, uselessness, and useless one should be substituted to get a translation that is true to the original text.

Right here, many who are well versed in the letter that "killeth" will say that Jesus believed in the devil, and that He said to some, "Ye are of your father the devil. . . . For he is a liar and the father thereof."

Quite so. He did say that; but at the same time He said of this devil that "there is no truth in him." If we refer to the many passages in which Jesus spoke of the devil, the evil spirits, or the devils (which He cast out), we shall find that He was always speaking of man's misplaced faith toward a figment of his own imagination - something that has no life in it, a belief that is not true: in other words, a lie and a liar. Yet both the lie and the false mind that lies can seem to exist.

For if you believe in the devil and have faith in what to you seems his power, then to you he exists; and the greater your faith, the more real he becomes to you, and likewise the greater power does he seem to possess. The law is that what you thoroughly believe, you become like; and so, sooner or later, you will begin to personify your devil. Your consciousness will express in thought and action and judgment the full graven image it has been feeding upon. Thus, since the whole belief is a lie, you become a self-incited lie, forgetting how to be truthful.

Now this was the class of people that Jesus was addressing. Be not of that class; for "all that watch for iniquity are cut off"; and "if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Instead, "look unto Me, and be ye saved." Become true masters of life in the only, possible way, which is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit."

When the soul rises to the high state of entire meekness and surrender to the Divine, it no longer fights on its own account, but allows the Christ as "the warrior within" to fight for it. And when the Christ fights within a soul, failure is impossible.

In the first, or lower, state we cry with Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

In the second, or higher, state we joyfully declare: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And then still more understandingly: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

God never tempts any man; but the souls of men are tested. Even so, we are distinctly told that we are never tested, or tried, above our strength. Therefore the only consistent understanding of this part of the Prayer is that, under all testings, we can remain faithful and so be delivered from the clutch of the great delusion - the delusion of the power of evil.

Moreover, we need this phrase of the Prayer - understood as a declaration that God is upholding us through our trial. For there are times in life, for all of us, when we are forced to battle in our souls with this seeming power which appears to be so real and mighty.

There is, indeed, only one way in which our souls can be fully delivered from this delusion - the power of the lower self - and that is by flinging our whole being into the ocean of God's Infinite Love. There is no other way.

As we yield ourselves to Him who is Love, His Strength pours into the soul. Then evil is conquered: that is, delusion is destroyed, and the earthly is transmuted into the heavenly. He who has tried for years to conquer one bad habit knows that it is in God's Strength alone that the victory can be won.

As the soul ascends the mystic hill of Calvary, "a little nearer yet toward the height where veiled Beauty sits," the discipline becomes sharper; for the entire lower nature has to be transmuted and every thought brought "into captivity . . . to the obedience of Christ."

Often the soul in its distress cries out to God to be delivered from what seems to be an obstacle to its ascent. But throughout the Ages, the answer rings the same: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My Strength is made perfect in weakness."

The conflict with so-called evil is apt to change its character as the soul advances. At the beginning of the mystic ascent, the temptations are principally connected with the senses and their relation to the outer world; but later on, it is the mental and emotional nature that has to be brought into subjection.

For if the gross temptations of the flesh no longer beset the soul, there still remains the discipline of the mind, the redirecting of thought, the "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."

To bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" seems an utter impossibility at first. But it has to be done, and can be done; for the disciple must become master in his own soul, and so he must learn to shut the door of the mind resolutely against all thoughts that tend to obscure the Divine Light.

Thoughts of pride, thoughts of discontent, thoughts of envy and jealousy; in fact, any and every thought connected with the desires of the lower separated

self must be rigorously excluded, if the disciple is to attain freedom and life by letting that mind be in him "which was also in Christ Jesus."

The struggle seems endless, and the only possible hope of victory lies in the complete surrender of the soul to the Divine Will. For though the "kingdom of evil" has no ultimate reality, it seems terribly real to many of us in our present condition.

Yet the end - the victory - is none the less sure. Indeed, when the soul is wholly conformed to the Divine, it will realize the truth that everything that had seemed to be an obstacle to its progress was really a stepping-stone to the life of that new kingdom of grace wherein Love reigns supreme, and the soul finds its rest in the Being of God.

(to be continued)

ALPHABET OF
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

FEBRUARY 1957

1. You ARE ALL sons of light and sons of the day.
2. BE patient.

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4. Give thanks in all CIRCUMSTANCES.
5. God DISCIPLINES us for our good.
6. When anything is EXPOSED by the light it becomes visible.
7. Discipline yields the FRUIT of righteousness.
8. GRACE to you and peace from GOD the Father.
9. We may share HIS HOLINESS.

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11. We know that IN everything God works for good.
12. You have no excuse, whoever you are, when you JUDGE another.
13. KEEP your life free.
14. LOOK to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.
15. Those who live according to the Spirit set their MINDS on the things of the Spirit.
16. Thy NAME is from everlasting to everlasting.

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18. OBTAIN salvation through OUR Lord Jesus Christ.
19. Let us run with PERSEVERANCE the race that is set before us.
20. QUIT ye like men.
21. RESPECT those who labor among you.
22. May you SPIRIT and SOUL and body be kept SOUND.
23. Give THANKS to God always.

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25. Maintain the UNITY of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
26. Add to your faith VIRTUE; and to VIRTUE knowledge.
27. May the God of peace Himself sanctify you WHOLLY.
28. YOUR faith is growing abundantly.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

SPIRITICITY is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle,
As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.