

SPIRITICITY September 1954

## NOTES ON THE SCRIPTURE

By Robert Applegate

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Our forefathers who came to this land three hundred years ago, who crossed the Atlantic ocean in small sailing ships, who made a home in a strange and formidable wilderness, who faced hostile Indians, hunger, cold, and fear, carried the Scripture with them and used it as their guide in life. It was their familiarity with the promises of Scripture and their belief in them that gave them the courage to leave everything that they knew, to face known and unknown perils and certain privation. The Scripture gave them the strength to tame the wilderness, the audacity to fight the greatest military power in the world in defense of their freedom, the endurance to persevere in the conflict until ultimate victory, the wisdom to write the best constitution ever made by man.

Today we are apt to belittle the heroism of the pioneers who settled this land and founded this nation. We seek to explain everything in terms of economic motives, although they leave much unexplained. We like to point out the mistakes that our forefathers made. They did make mistakes, but the important fact is that they never let their mistakes discourage them. They learned by them. Yet, even when we admit, the wisdom, the courage, the endurance of these men, we overlook the source of these virtues. We are loath to admit that this source was the Scripture and the God who gave the Scripture to us, though they never denied this. They were unquestionably mistaken in some of their interpretations of the Bible; but they believed in it as they did understand it, and they were true to what they believed, because they believed in their hearts. They used the Scripture as a handbook for living, and the results indicate the wisdom of their choice.

We, the descendants of the pioneers and of those who had the courage to follow them, seem to have been softened by prosperity and ease. We seem to have lost the courage, the vision that have made this country great. We are afraid of the heat; we are afraid of the cold; we are afraid of our children; we are afraid of what people will think or will say; we are afraid of want and insecurity; we are afraid of strange doctrines, of anything that is new; we are afraid of the unknown; we are afraid of the future. It must be true that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; for, when that "fear" goes, every other fear enters. What has happened to us? Is it that we have forgotten the Scripture? that, even if we have studied it, we have not taken it seriously? have not believed in it? Have we become too rationalistic and therefore overcautious? Where is our courage? Where is our faith? We do not want to go back to the ways of our forefathers, great as they were. But surely we do not want to lose the courage that has given us this great land to enjoy and the freedom to enjoy it.

Today most men are abysmally ignorant of the Scripture. And, of those who are acquainted with it, the majority regard it in one of two extreme lights, both of which are equally false. Some who know the Scripture slightly regard it

as verbally inspired. They believe, or claim to believe, that every statement in it is true in its obvious surface meaning.

This attitude is so ridiculous that there is no need to dwell upon it. The Scripture is a gold mine of wisdom, but not every statement in it is pure gold, any more than every rock taken out of a hole in the ground is pure metal. The gold is there, but it must be dug for, and it must be separated from what is worthless.

Another class of people regard the Bible as a source of comfort, perhaps, as a beautiful piece of writing; but basically just another book, written a long time ago by men who did not have the advantages of modern scientific education. Neither of these types of readers receive any benefit from the Treasury of Wisdom, and even they are a small minority. Most of us do not know the Bible at all.

There are several reasons for our ignorance of the Bible. First there is the pseudo-scientific rationalism that has been our mental environment. During the last century, science and reason were set up as twin gods. They have started to show their feet of clay, but they still have many votaries. The cry has been, and often still is, "I will not believe anything that I cannot understand" - as though man's little mind could understand any of the basic facts of life. Our reasoning seems to have given us command of nature, but it has not given us courage. We should not be too hasty in accepting it as the final authority in matters of belief. And yet it was not even our reasoning that gave us command over nature. It was the scientific method of trying everything and accepting as true only that which worked every time. Is not this the attitude to take toward the Scripture if we would be truly scientific and reasonable?

Another reason for our ignorance of our sacred writings is that many of us are repelled by the fanaticism and self-righteousness of the so-called fundamentalists. They claim to believe in the Scripture, but they simply take what they want and twist it to suit their own emotional predilections. In so doing they have cast a shadow of opprobrium over the sacred books.

In recent years there has been a deluge of new translations of the Bible and particularly of the New Testament. The reason for this is obvious. Many have reawakened to the realization that the Bible contains much of tremendous importance to us, but that the King James Version no longer speaks in the language of the people. The archaism of its diction serves too often to conceal rather than to communicate the original meaning. Those of us who were brought up with this version love it because we are familiar with it and because its language is beautiful. Nevertheless the archaism of this language has disadvantages. It makes the Scripture seem to be something divorced from everyday life - beautiful like the tales of King Arthur and his knights, but of no practical immediacy. This is reflected in the common attitude that there are two ways of life. There is a Christian way that would be beautiful if everyone followed it, and there is a practical way that everyone does follow.

The writers of the books that have become sacred Scripture were not idle dreamers who had visions of a fairyland utopia, where everybody is motivated by pure love. They had no delusions about the nature of men. But they knew that they had found the pearl of great price. They knew that, if anyone listened to their instruction and followed it - regardless of what all others were doing - he would profit immensely. They knew also that whoever hardened his heart against the instruction was losing the most priceless gift ever offered to man.

They did not expect praise from men; they did not expect acceptance of their teaching. They knew what men are. They said nothing about having faith in human nature. "Beware of men," Jesus Christ said. "Have faith in God."

The writers of Scripture did not write in archaic, poetic diction, nor in theological terms. They wrote in the common language of the day; for they were addressing themselves to all people - or to all who would listen to them not to theologians only. Reading the New Testament in the original Greek is like reading a current newspaper in that the language is simple, direct, concrete. It is the language that would have been used in newspapers, if there had been any in the time of Christ. Unfortunately this is not true of any of the current translations of the New Testament. Such key words as grace, righteousness, sin, salvation, redemption are not part of our everyday vocabulary. For most people they have come to have purely theological connotations. Their meaning is hazy. Yet everyone of these words translates a term that was in everyday use at the time the New Testament was written.

When Paul wrote to his friends, "By grace are ye saved through faith," they knew what he meant without consulting a dictionary. For grace was the ordinary word for kindness, for a gift. Saved meant delivered (from every negation: unhappiness, disease, want, fear, ignorance, doubt, frustration, confusion). "By the gift of God you are healed and delivered, and you accept this by believing it."

The word righteousness is best rendered by our modern term ethics. Thus we find Jesus Christ instructing us that, unless our ethics exceeds that of the orthodoxly religious, we shall in no wise come to know God.

When a person slices a golf ball off into the woods, he knows that he has made a mistake, but he does not regard himself as a sinner. Yet the word that is translated sin in the New Testament was, at the time it was written, the ordinary word for making a mistake or missing the mark. Dorothy Dix once commented that we seem to be punished more for our mistakes than for our sins. Our mistakes are our sins. Every mistake is a sin in the Biblical sense of the word. "He (Jesus Christ) was manifested to take away our mistakes," writes the Apostle John. This is the teaching of Christianity. Whoever accepts what Jesus Christ did by believing in it is freed from the consequences of his past mistakes and is privileged to enter a new life, where he need make no mistakes. This is salvation and redemption, the deliverance from the consequences of our mistakes, which appear as sickness, misfortune, unhappiness.

It is unfortunate that none of the modern translations have succeeded in rendering the Bible accurately in our everyday diction. However the Bible does have the property of revealing itself to anyone who reads it with an open mind. It should be read (in whatever translation is the easiest). It should be used as a guide to life. It has something for everyone. It meets everyone on his own level. It is inexhaustible. There are always new inspirations, new guidance in it. No one knows the Scripture, for there is always something more in it to be discovered. We should not try to read it straight through from beginning to end, which is a laborious and largely unprofitable undertaking. We should read as the Spirit leads us, for It is leading us. And, when we read, we should lay aside all preconceived ideas as to what the words mean. Commentaries are of very little help. They often serve more to attenuate than to clarify the meaning. They are largely concerned with apologizing for extreme statements. But those who wrote the Scripture, and particularly those who wrote the New Testament, had a truer grasp of the changeless realities of God than do the

commentators. If we want to know the meaning of what we read, we should ask the Father who has promised, "Ask, and it shall be given you."

Above all - even if we read nothing else - we should read and reread the words of Jesus Christ. They are the truest words ever spoken on earth. They will teach us the Truth as nothing else can. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," He said. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

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PERFECTION: THE CHRIST IDEAL

By Alden Truesdell

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:

. . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, . . . if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:

. . . but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"Being made perfect, he (Christ Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

The ideals in any man are his very life, and the quality of the ideals determines the quality of the life of that man. Consider, then, for the purpose of expansion of idealism, the Perfection that is the Christ Ideal, or the Ideal of Christ. Ideals are so important that, unless a man goes along with his ideals, he is liable to see his ideals going along without him. And, if ideals are such a necessity, how essential must be the Ideal of Him who has said, "As the heavens higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"?

Perfection is indefinable, for it is the summation of all qualities. Perfectionists in any field are never satisfied with the results of their efforts, but are continually building and rebuilding. Thus we are instructed by one exceptionally wise teacher, "A divine (right-knowing) discontent properly directed and exercised will deepen the channels of influx."

It is good to say now and again, "My goal is perfection." For it is just as easy to be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," as it is to be imperfect or partly perfect. It is easier. When a man imitates imperfection, he is trying to step out of character, to be a distorted reflection. But, when he is being perfect, he is being himself, as he was designed to be when God made him in His own Image and after His own Likeness.

Suppose a man has relinquished all his hopes of worldly riches: houses, lands, huge accumulations of money, securities, stocks, and bonds. Sensing that somehow his dependence upon these commodities has worked to his disadvantage, he has turned to Something that he believes to be more satisfying, more durable,

much more pleasant. Realizing how difficult it is to gain complete satisfaction while hampered by possessions, he has turned - to what?

This man has already had a measure of the reward the world has to offer. He has learned to live with the world and its ways, but he has not been too happy about it. Even at its best, the way of the world has proved shallow and distasteful. He seeks release and relief. He has turned from that which is inadequate; he is turning to That which offers satisfaction. The old way has proved its limited worth; the new way must yield something superior in every point.

The life man has been living has not been a true life. It has been a dream life. Now he is awakening to Reality; turning from a dream to Reality, from a lie to Truth. He would not care to turn from something unsatisfactory to something inadequate, but the adequacy of what he now finds is more than he bargained for. He asked only a little relief, and perfection itself is tendered to him. He may feel as did Peter, when he realized the true nature of Christ-hood and cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But, if one is going to turn, why should he turn to anything less than the best? If at any time he feels that he has made a bad bargain, he need only inquire of the One to whom he has turned, to be reassured and to hear the commitment:

"There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time."

Everyone has access to Ideals, but not everyone has discovered that the Ideals are, in themselves, the treasure that he is seeking. Many, sensing the inner realm of high Ideals, look to the world for the fulfillment of the Ideals. And the world takes the Ideals and the idealists to itself, for itself - not for the fulfilling of the Ideals, but to maintain its own dominion.

Where is the highest Ideal to be found? Jesus Christ prayed to His Father, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." So the highest Ideal must be in man's original Perfection, in his original relation to "him who hath created."

What, then, is the purpose of the Ideal? Like virtue, it is its own reward. When the Ideal is maintained, sustained, and loved for Its own sake, It will overcome the world. If the Ideal is kept intact, It will return man to his original state of dominion. If the Ideal is cherished for Its own Perfection, that Perfection will be manifested.

Here is where reverence, adoration, and aspiration come into action.

"As it is written, Eye, hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for thy Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

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FACE YOUR DOOR TO FREEDOM

By Nell Truesdell

What are you running away from? Whatever it is, stop for awhile and consider this truth: Every experience in life is an open door to freedom.

Stand where you are. Have you ever noticed that a good dog stands his ground, while he faces whatever challenges him? Unlike a cur that will run, tail between legs, yelping for cover, a good dog sizes up the situation and waits for an opening to make an attack.

You must deal with your own limitations. Every experience you meet is the same experience in a different guise. To run is to cut yourself off from a possible way of escape. To run is to increase the magnitude of your difficulties; for fear added to fear weakens you and makes your overcoming more arduous.

In every experience you can do one of three things:

- 1) Fight back, and so strengthen your adversary.
- 2) Run away, and meet your problem, increased in size, around the next corner.
- 3) Stand and look upward to God.

Running away from a problem is the general reaction among human beings. But any problem originates within the consciousness of the person who has the problem. Hence it is necessary for each one to learn to face and to solve his own problems.

You may believe that other people are causing you hardship, anxiety, limitation, disturbance. It is so easy to lay the blame on somebody else. But any problem in your life is an effect, in your consciousness, of your own reactions to others or to conditions that appear to touch you.

To deal with any problem, try to deal entirely with God. Lay aside your personal reactions for a little while and turn directly to God. Look to Him without wavering, even if you feel that nothing will happen. Be steadfast in your gaze toward the Unknown; for out of the vast unrealized store of Good will come the necessary detail, the one bit of guidance that will solve your difficulty.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him."

"He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense: I shall not be moved."

God's arm is not shortened. He has not lost His ancient magic touch. Today He is your help, your relief from want or sorrow or strife. The one way to get God's help is to look toward Him.

"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption (freedom) draweth nigh."

Enter into the freedom that is yours. Your present experience is the open door to that freedom.

Alphabet Of  
DAILY MEDITATIONS  
For Every Week Day Of The Month

SEPTEMBER 1954

1. Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with ALL your heart.
2. Let the BEAUTY of the Lord our God BE upon us.
3. Be of good CHEER: it is I; be not afraid.
4. The Lord DIRECT your hearts unto the love of God.

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6. In EVERYTHING give thanks.
7. Thy FAITH hath made thee whole,
8. GREAT is the mystery of GODLINESS.
9. Take HEED what ye HEAR.
10. Sanctify the Lord God IN your heart.
11. Thy JUDGMENTS are made manifest.

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13. Be counted worthy of the KINGDOM.
14. The earth was LIGHTENED with His glory.
15. God giveth not the Spirit by MEASURE.
16. Walk in NEWNESS of life.
17. We OUGHT to OBEY God rather than men.
18. PEACE, be still.

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20. Study to be QUIET.
21. Your REWARD shall be great.
22. SERVE the Lord with all your heart.
23. Obey the TRUTH THROUGH the Spirit.
24. In UNDERSTANDING be men.
25. This is the VICTORY.

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27. I shall be WHOLE.
28. Come YE YOURSELVES apart . . . and rest awhile.
29. Be ZEALOUSLY affected always.
30. He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light.

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"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."

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