

April - June 2012

The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 4

“And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.” (Exodus 25:10-11)

Before any detail was given regarding the Tabernacle itself, God gave instructions concerning **the Ark**. This was priority number one. Without this particular article of furniture, all the service of the Tabernacle would have been meaningless. It was the Ark which was the most glorious item in the sanctuary; and which will occupy coming articles in this series.

Coupled with the Ark was that which was known as the ‘Mercy Seat’. This actually formed a ‘lid’ to the Ark. Whilst these two components are intimately related – as two parts which make a whole – they are described separately in Scripture. The same format will be followed here.

The Ark itself was a rectangular wooden chest. It was 2½ cubits in length, 1½ cubits wide, and 1½ cubits high. The cubit was a Hebrew measurement of length, corresponding to the distance on a man’s arm between the elbow and tip of the middle finger, between 18 and 22 inches (45 – 55cm). Taking an average of 20 inches (50cm), the Ark would have comprised a box four feet (1.25m) long, the depth and height each being two feet six inches (0.75m).

It was constructed of Shittim or Acacia wood, entirely overlaid with gold, such that nothing other than gold would appear to the eye of the observer.

Seeing that this item was the most holy and important piece of the whole sanctuary, one might have expected that the Tabernacle itself would be made first, and then, when all was finalised and a suitable room prepared, the Ark fabricated, and put it into its place. This however, was not God's chosen order. He focuses first upon that which is highest and holiest, and works away from that point. The significance of this sequence will become apparent as the subject is further explored.

In this rather strange wooden chest is to be seen a type or illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlikely though it may appear, the details of the Ark have spiritual relevance, and point toward the Saviour. Just as the Ark was composed of two contrasting materials – wood and gold – so too, Christ the Mediator had two natures – human and Divine. In the Ark were deposited the two Tables of Stone – the Law of God; Christ Himself testified, *“Thy Law is within My heart”* (Psalm 40:8).

Other vessels and articles within the Tabernacle pre-figure different aspects of the Lord's **work**, and the effects and consequences of that work; but the Ark speaks of His **person** – what He **is**, as opposed to what He has **done**. God begins with that which is highest and holiest, and proceeds from that point: the very centre of the Divine economy is **Christ** – everything else revolves around Him: *“He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence”* (Colossians 1:17-18).

The Christian, with a human mindset and earthly perspective, tends to major upon what Christ has done for him; whereas the emphasis of Scripture is upon Christ **Himself**. For example, consider the words of John the Baptist: *“Behold the Lamb of God [His person first] which taketh away the sin of the world”* [His work second] (John 1:29). The Apostle Paul: *“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ,*

[His person] *and Him crucified* ” [His work] (1 Corinthians 2:2). The Apostle John: “*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst... stood a Lamb [His person] as it had been slain*” [His work] (Revelation 5:6).

Thus the Ark takes precedence over all else which would be in the Tabernacle, for this holy vessel typified Christ Himself; not in His work, but in His person. Consequently, it was first in order, the zenith and centre around which everything else revolved, and from which it all proceeded. It is a sad but necessary point to make that, in many modern churches, the very reverse of this order is applied. They obtain a building, devise plans, arrange events and functions, and only then decide how the gospel will be preached, and where Christ might be ‘fitted in’ – a wholly unbiblical approach. A true church will grow up around Christ, grounded upon Him; and not on the dubious foundations of denominational creeds, para-church organisations, or a proliferation of pseudo-religious activities.

Now to come to the specific details of the Ark and the wealth of meaning with which every detail is loaded:

1.) The Materials

A. Shittim Wood

The timber used for the Ark was derived from the Acacia tree, which is widely reported in Bible dictionaries; some descriptions include, “very heavy”, “extremely hard wood”, “indestructible by insects”, with “luxurious foliage”, having a “fine and beautiful grain”, “eminently suitable for furniture and fine work”, “virtually imperishable”, “used by the Egyptians for their mummy cases” – all of which is highly suggestive. Furthermore, it grew, of all places, in the deserts of Sinai.

The wood of the ark typifies the **human nature** of Christ. As the prophecy stated: “*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a **dry ground*** ” (Isaiah 53:2). The Acacia tree was

possibly the only tree which grew to any size or maturity in the deserts through which Israel passed during their wanderings. Similarly Christ, the Second Adam, is the only man who has ever walked through the sinful wilderness of this world, spiritually and morally whole, in a state of perfection, complete in every detail. He alone is, “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Hebrews 7:26).

Just as Shittim wood was renowned for its durability and resistance to attack, so the Saviour when upon earth proved impervious to all the ravages of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. All the taunts and reproaches of man left Him unscathed; all the fiery darts of the Evil One could never penetrate, or impair His integrity. He was the only one fitted for the finest and noblest of all God’s works, namely, the redemption of His chosen people from their sins.

Another point of interest, is that the timber from the Acacia tree was sometimes translated in antiquity as ‘the incorruptible wood’. Herein is a fundamental truth concerning the Lord’s humanity. Christ was truly human. He is referred to in Scripture numerous times as ‘The Son of Man’, emphasising this point; and in 1 Timothy 2:5 as, “*the man Christ Jesus*”. But His humanity was uncorrupted, and incorruptible. “*In Him was no sin*” (1 John 3:5); He was “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). He was begotten of the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin; an immaculate humanity; pronounced as “*that Holy thing which shall be born*” (Luke 1:35). Thus the wood of the Ark speaks with great eloquence of the perfect Humanity of the Lord Jesus.

B. Pure Gold

This material prefigured the Lord’s **Divine nature**. The Acacia boards gave the form, shape and dimensions to the Ark, but the appearance was all of gold. No wood was visible throughout the whole chest. Likewise, Christ’s humanity conferred to Him the form in

which He was seen of men. The eternal Son of God “*took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And... found in fashion as a man*” (Philippians 2:7-8). He who was Light of Light, Creator and Upholder of all things, yet humbled Himself and became man. He was, and is, and forever will remain the man Christ Jesus.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures guard against a low view of the Mediator. He is ‘encased in gold’. Scrutinize Him from every viewpoint, look at Him from any perspective, behold Him from all angles, and there can be no other conclusion than that He is Divine! In the Ark, the gold covered all the timber; so with the Saviour, His Divine nature absolutely covered His ‘servant’s form’. Not only as man looked upon Him outwardly, but also as the omniscient eye of Almighty God viewed Him, without and within, and said, “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 17:5). He did no sin, He knew no sin, in Him there was no sin – the gold of His Divine nature was pure and unalloyed.

The significance of the Ark thus becomes apparent. Even the materials used foreshadow that which the Apostle Paul terms, “*the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh*” (1 Timothy 3:16). Here in Exodus chapter twenty-five are symbolised the two natures of the Mediator. The reason for the Ark’s primacy may also now be understood; why it was the first article to be mentioned to Moses in the mount. In matters pertaining to salvation, and indeed in all spiritual matters, a sound view of Christ is essential – because everything revolves around Him. He is central to the great eternal plan of Almighty God. “*And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent*” (John 17:3). Eternal life is from God Himself, and given unto His elect people through Jesus Christ – whom He sent from Heaven to become the Mediator and Saviour, and so redeem that people from destruction.

2.) The Contents

Describing the arrangement of the Tabernacle, Paul records that there came, “*after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant*” (Hebrews 9:3-4). Three items were placed in the Ark:

A. The Pot of Manna

This was a sample of that miraculous daily food which God provided for His people throughout the whole of their journey from bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. Does not this aptly portray Christ, as the Bread of Life? As the manna was in the Ark, so in Christ there is daily provision for the saint every step of life’s pilgrimage, until they reach their eternal destination and inheritance, reserved in Heaven.

B. Aaron’s Rod that budded

The history of this remarkable artefact is given in the book of Numbers chapters 16 and 17. A revolt was raised against Moses and Aaron, headed by Korah, concerning the rights of priesthood. Moses was instructed to take twelve rods, one for each tribe of Israel, and inscribe Aaron’s name upon the rod assigned to the tribe of Levi. These staves were to be laid out in order, and on the morrow, one of the twelve would have budded, indicating which tribe was chosen of God for the priesthood, and thereby settling the controversy.

“And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds... And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron’s rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from Me, that they die not ” (Numbers 17:8, 10). Thus the

priestly ministry of Aaron was confirmed. He was to preserve God's people as they passed through the wilderness. The staff laid up in the Ark served as a constant reminder that God had appointed a priest among His people to plead for, and represent them in His holy sight.

Wonderful typology is here. All too frequently in their wilderness journey, the Lord's people are to be heard murmuring against Him, doubting His providence and striving against His sovereign will. Yet in Christ they have "*a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*" (Hebrews 2:17). Despite their failings and weaknesses, He ever liveth to make intercession for them. He saves to the uttermost. Not one, however prone to stumbling, will be lost. Oh, what praise and thanks is due for Christ's office as High Priest over the household of God!

C. The Tables of Stone

The words of Christ are spoken prophetically by the Psalmist: "*Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart*" (Psalm 40:7-8). Where the first man failed, the last man triumphed. The Saviour was made subject to the law (cf Galatians 4:4), but perfectly fulfilled it (cf. Matthew 5:17). Christ has answered every requirement of the Divine Law on behalf of His people. He has taken full responsibility in their stead, and discharged it wholly. Thus every redeemed sinner can say in the language of Scripture: "*In the Lord have I righteousness*" (Isaiah 45:24). The precepts and requirements of God, which no man could ever satisfy have been fulfilled by the Saviour. The "*handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, [He] took it out of the way*" (Colossians 2:14) by virtue of His perfect obedience and sacrifice. The whole ransomed Church of God can acclaim its glorious Head as 'the Lord, their righteousness'.

W. H. Molland
(transcribed by R. J. Steward)

BEHOLDING THE ARK

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Revelation 11:19)

Let us think of what was in the ancient ark of the covenant, for all that was in that ark as a type is to be seen in Christ our heavenly covenant ark above.

In that ark, if you and I could have gone into the holy place, and have had our eyes strengthened to look, we should have seen, first, God dwelling among men. What a wonderful thing! Over the top of the lid of that sacred coffer which was called the ark, there shone an amazing light which was the index of the presence of God. He was in the midst of the camp of Israel. He that filleth heaven and earth, the infinite Jehovah, deigned to make that place His special dwelling-place, so that He is addressed as, *“Thou that dwellest between the cherubims”* (Psalm 80:1). Here is a part of the new covenant: *“I will dwell in them, and walk in them”* (2 Corinthians 6:16). It is marvellous that God does speak with men. He whom you heard thundering, last night, as He drove His chariot through the sky, that God in infinite condescension speaks with us, and has come down to us, and taken us into relationship with Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once the fellow of the Almighty, and the brother of the sons of men. Oh beloved, rejoice in the covenant, that God is no longer divided from men! The chasm made by sin is filled, the gulf is bridged, and God now dwells with me, and manifests Himself to them; and *“the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him”* (Psalm 25:14).

Next, in that ark you would have noticed, if you could have seen into it, God reconciled and communing with men upon the mercy-seat. Over the top of that ark, as I have told you, was a golden lid, which

fitted it, and covered it exactly, and that golden lid was called the mercy-seat, the throne of grace. There God spoke with men. He sat there, as it were, enthroned as the Friend of men. Now, it is a part of the covenant that God hears prayer, that God answers our petitions, that He meets us in a way of reconciled love, that He speaks to us in tones which the spirit can hear though the ear cannot. Thank God for a blood-besprinkled mercy-seat. What should we do if we had not that as our meeting-place with the thrice-holy Jehovah?

Then, within the ark, underneath the lid, if we could have looked in, we should have seen the law, the two tables of stone, which represent law fulfilled in Christ, and henceforth laid up in His heart, and laid up in our hearts, too, if we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Now, this is our joy, that the law of God has nothing against the believer. It is fulfilled in Christ, and we see it laid up in Christ, not to be a stone to fall upon us to grind us to powder, but beautiful and fair to look upon as it is in the heart of Christ, and fulfilled in the life of Christ. I rejoice in the covenant which contains in it stipulations all fulfilled, and commands all executed, by our great Representative.

Together with those tables of the law there was laid up a rod, a rod which had originally been a dry stick in the hands of Aaron, but when it was laid up before the Lord it budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. So, in the covenant of grace, we see the kingdom established and flourishing in Christ, and we rejoice in it. Oh how pleased we are to bow before His fruitful sceptre! What wonderful fruit we gather from that blessed rod! Reign, reign, Jesus, reign! The more Thou dost rule us, the more Thou art absolute Sovereign of our hearts, the happier shall we be, and the more shall we delight ourselves in Thee. There is no liberty like complete subjection beneath the sway of Jesus who is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Then, by the side of that rod there was laid up the golden pot full of manna, the provision made for the wilderness. Let us rejoice that there is in the covenant all the provision that we need. God has laid up for us in Christ all our spiritual meat, all the food that we shall ever need between here and heaven. ‘Feed me till I want no more’, we cry to our blessed covenant Representative, and He will do so.

Then, over the top of the ark, sat the cherubim with outstretched wings, as, I think, representing how the angels are in league with us, and with the angels all the forces and powers of the universe (cf Hebrews 1:14). Child of God, you may travel by land or sea; you may go where you will; for everywhere you are in your Father’s house. All that you see about you is a friend to you, since you are a friend to God. I often wonder that the earth bears up ungodly men. It must groan beneath the weight of a swearer; it must want to open and swallow him up. But with the gracious man, the man who fears God, all things are at peace; and we may know it to be so. *“Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands”* (Isaiah 55:12). We do not often enough realize, I think, the friendship of all God’s creatures to those who are His children... Oh yes, we are quite at home anywhere, now that God is our God! True, the earth travaileth, and is in pain, and the creation suffers and will suffer till Christ comes again; but still her travail is our travail, and we are in sympathy with her, and when she doth reflect the glory of her God she is our looking-glass in which we see our Father’s face.

Thus, I think, I have shown you that there is much to be seen in the ark of the covenant. God give us grace, like the angels, to fix our eyes upon it! ‘Which things the angels desire to look into’. We have more to do with the ark of His covenant than they have; let us be more desirous even than they are to look therein.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

...In the directions given concerning the Tabernacle, the Ark and Mercy Seat – the throne of God's glory and power in the midst of Israel – is first described; and we subsequently get directions for the making of other dependent and subordinate vessels of ministry, and the courts of the Tabernacle itself in which they were to be placed. It seems as if the Lord would lead at once to the great object that was before Him, namely, to establish a place for Himself in the midst of His people; where He might meet Israel's lawgiver and Israel's priest; and from whence He might give directions and commandments for their guidance and blessing. And all the laboured and varied services of the Tabernacle had [the purpose of keeping] the people and the Place of Meeting clean, so that God might be able to dwell among them uninterruptedly, to be their defence, their help, and their guide.

The Ark was a chest or coffer, as to its chief substance made of wood; the gold being its casing within and without. In seeking to understand this type, our thoughts will naturally be directed first to the materials of which this holy vessel was formed. The wood is rightly held to be a type of the Lord's human nature. Though truly man, yet in blessed contrast with all other men, the Lord was one whom neither the temptations of Satan could seduce, nor the evil around Him defile – one who, pure and spotless at His birth, withstood unmoved every form of evil. The shittim wood seems to be a fitting emblem of that distinguishing characteristic of His humanity, its unstained spotlessness, its incorruptibility – that which nothing could taint or defile; and yet, by reason of which, He is able to have all sympathy and fellow-feeling for the weak and tempted, and to stand as their glorious representative before God in heaven.

It was needful that He who was to sustain the place of mediation between God and men should be able, on the one hand, truly to represent those for whom He stood, should thoroughly understand their need, should be able to feel for them and with them in their various temptations. And at the same time He must also be fit for the most holy and glorious presence of God, must know and be acquainted with God as well as men, must be the ‘fellow’ of God as well as of men (cf. Zechariah 13:7, Psalm 45:7). He must Himself be as competent to be made the depository of the thoughts and feelings and power of God, as of the need and weakness and wants of men; and thus might be the channel of blessing from God to men, and the way of approach of men to God. The wood is that material which shadows forth the nature of Christ as man, whereby He is able to take this place on behalf of men, for that He Himself truly is a man in glory. The gold which overlaid the wood within and without added its strength, its value, its brilliancy and glory to the wood; even so the blessed Lord, because He is Himself God, stands in His office of mediator in all His own divine and eternal power, glory, and preciousness, in the presence of God.

The Ark was to contain the two tables of the Covenant, which were delivered to Moses at Sinai. “*And thou shalt put into the Ark the testimony which I shall give thee*” (Exodus 25:16, 21). “*And Moses took and put the testimony into the Ark*” (Exodus 40:20). The especial use of the Ark was to carefully preserve the law, but to preserve it out of sight; to remove it out of Israel’s way, and for ever to conceal the ministration of death, and prevent its breaking forth in vengeance. A beautiful type of Him who, having come to do the will of God, and delighted in it, yea, even in His heart, having died also in accomplishment of that will under the curse, now stands before God as the one who has fulfilled all righteousness, and the witness also of vindicated justice; who has forever removed the stern barrier that prevented man’s approach to God, namely, the demands against him

of an unfulfilled law. So that now righteousness, which was the very hindrance, becomes the ground of our full and free intercourse with God. Our way to God is not now by the law, but by Christ, by whom it has been taken out of the way and fulfilled; God meets us in Him.

H. W. Soltau (1805 – 1875)

“I have no doubt that the ark was intended to represent Christ, the fulfiller of all righteousness. Jeremiah spake of Him: *“This is His name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness”* (Jeremiah 23:6); and in the fortieth Psalm He says to the Father, *“I delight to do Thy will, O My God, yea, Thy law is within My heart”* (Psalm 40:8). And thus, when He came, He told John, *“it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). And Paul tells us, *“By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”* (Romans 5:19). This is the main thing in the Gospel, just as the Ark was the main thing under the law. Without the Ark, the Tabernacle was but an empty form. Without Christ – our law-fulfilling Righteousness – religion is but a form and shadow.”

R. M. M’Cheyne (1813 – 1843)

ANNUAL BIBLE CONVENTION

2nd & 3rd June 2012 D.V.

Saturday 3.30 p.m. & 6.00 p.m. Tea served 5.00 p.m.

Lord’s Day 10.45 a.m. & 6.30 p.m.

Preacher: **W. J. Seaton**
(Inverness)

a cordial invitation is extended to all

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

“Thou art fairer than the children of men” (Psalm 45:2)

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet” (Psalm 104: 34)

Before we dwell on the moving story of Calvary, or exhibit to you a crucified Saviour, or afford a display of his glorious atonement, let us advert to the divine person and character of our Immanuel. Let us admire His glorious perfections. A saving knowledge of Christ will constitute the foundation of our immortal joys; will lead us to eternal life, and the highest state of felicity in heaven above. *“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”* (John 17:3).

Oh, that we might obtain a glimpse of the matchless person of Christ! Oh, that we might behold ‘the King, in His beauty’. Surely then would our sight and eyes be turned away from viewing vanity. If there is an object in the universe that should attract our attention, excite our admiration, warm our affections, and demand our love; surely it is the glorious Saviour, the blessed Son of God, who is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. Christ is the most glorious being in the universe of God. Blessed Jesus! Reveal Thyself unto us in all Thy transcendent loveliness, in all Thy surpassing beauty.

‘Thou art fairer than the children of men’; ‘the chief among ten thousand’; ‘yea, Thou art altogether lovely’... Manifest Thyself unto us as Thou dost not unto the world. Gladden our guilty souls with the beams of Thy mercy and grace. Unfurl the banner of Thy wondrous love over us; encircle us in the arms of Thy compassion, and lift upon us the light of Thy gracious countenance... We can know but little, comparatively, of the excellence and glory of Christ’s person, until we see Him on His heavenly throne, in all His unveiled glory. Then shall

we see Him as He is, face to face, and forever behold His matchless beauty. What a glorious sight will that be, to see the Redeemer shining in the perfection of beauty. What a blessed privilege, to dwell forever in the presence of the great King, to surround the radiant throne of heaven, and amid the splendours of the celestial Paradise, to sound through endless ages the notes of seraphic praise, to Him that redeemed us from eternal misery with His own most precious blood!

Now, is Christ precious to you? Do you desire to know more and more about Him? Is He formed in you, the hope of glory? If so, we trust you will follow us with a joyful heart in our presentation of His character and excellence as they are vividly portrayed in the Holy Scriptures. That blessed Redeemer who once hung as a bleeding victim on Calvary; who endured the death of the cross there; is the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father in power and glory, possessing all the attributes of Deity.

The Scriptures plainly assert that Christ is God, the Creator of the universe. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made”*. (John 1:1-3). Christ bears the very image of the everlasting Father. Yes, the eternal Son of God, our blessed Saviour, is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. *“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Hebrews 1:3).

What a fullness of grace and glory dwells in the blessed Jesus! And what divine power has He displayed in the works of creation! By His word, were all things made. He spoke and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. He only gave the command, and this world, with all its inhabitants, sprung into being. Such is His

illimitable power, that He has created and sustained for ages, millions of fixed and moving worlds of light and glory. With unerring precision, He guides the planets in their revolutions, and directs the comets in their flaming march. With an arm of omnipotence, He has bespangled the midnight sky with its glowing luminaries; and that same mysterious personage who endured the ignominious death of Calvary, has created this beautiful, green earth on which we tread; formed the moon in her silvery brightness, and kindled up the sun in all his glory. *“By the word of the Lord, were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth”* (Psalm 33:6). He has, *“measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance”* (Isaiah 40:12).

Christ is the second person in the glorious Trinity, and is of equal power with God the Father, and God the Spirit. Yes He, *“thought it not robbery to be equal with God”*, and as the Creator of the universe, He reigns, the omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth. All power is entrusted to Him, and all worlds are the offspring of his almighty fiat, the product of his creative skill. This is the same blessed Saviour who bled and died on earth, *“which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number”* (Job 9:7-10).

Christian, go out and gaze upon the sky, when the solemn stillness of night pervades a slumbering world; survey the countless glories of the starry firmament; view the numberless suns that shine above you; think of the innumerable planets that revolve around these suns; contemplate the mighty systems of worlds that move in celestial harmony and majesty through boundless space. Your Saviour made them all.

Then think of His power, wisdom, and goodness as manifested in all His works. Think of His original glory and blessedness; but above all, think of His amazing condescension and infinite love for you. He who hung out these brilliant orbs, once stooped from His celestial throne of glory to assume human nature, and bleed and die for you! Yes, to die the death of the cross! He *“made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:7-8). Wonderful condescension. Amazing love! Was there ever love like this, that led Christ to Calvary, there to lay down his precious life for sinners! No! the annals of time do not furnish a parallel; neither is it to be found in the records of eternity.

Christ, the only begotten Son of God, lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity; possessing untold glory with Him. But out of infinite compassion and boundless love for His children, His redeemed, He consented, for a time, to veil that glory in humanity, and bleed upon the accursed tree. He became partaker of flesh and blood. *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

He gave His blessed body to be broken, and His precious blood to be shed for sinners. He assumed their nature. *“For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”* (Hebrews 2:16-17).

In Christ, the divine and human natures are admirably united in one glorious person. He is truly God and truly man. He is our Creator, our Preserver, our bountiful Benefactor; and yet he is bone of our bone

and flesh of our flesh. He is our near kinsman; our elder brother; our gracious friend who loves at all times; our glorious Redeemer.

In our nature, Christ suffered and died for us; in our nature He rose triumphant from the grave; and He now wears it before the throne of God. Oh how highly has Christ exalted human nature! He has elevated it to the right hand of God, to the greatest honours and the brightest state of felicity in the heaven of heavens. In glory, the redeemed shall be made like Christ; their bodies shall shine like His glorious body. Says an Apostle, "*we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:2). Then shall we be with Him, and be entirely like Him to all eternity. Then shall we see Him face to face in His heavenly kingdom. Yea, we shall look into the very face of the blessed Jesus, and behold in that countenance the expressions of tenderest love for us, His redeemed. Then shall we see what a lovely Saviour we have! Then shall we discern those excellencies in the person of Christ, which are now obscured by the veil of mortality.

Precious Saviour! Thy name is as ointment poured forth. Thou art all our salvation and desire. We love Thee, because Thou first lovedst us. Whom have we in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that we desire besides Thee. Thou art our way to the Father, the way in which the redeemed journey through a wilderness world to the heavenly Canaan. Thou are the blessed day-star which illuminates our path through a bewildering world, and guides it safely over life's tempestuous ocean into the harbour of eternal glory. Blessed Redeemer, may I love and prize Thee more and more on earth, until, prepared for those happy mansions above, I bid adieu to this sinful, sorrowful world, enter into the joy of my Lord, and raise a never-ending song of praise in glory to Thee my Almighty Saviour.

D. A. Harsha (1827 – 1895)

EDITORIAL

Love toward Christ is an emotion unknown to the natural man; an affection that is alien to the human heart – except for a work of divine intervention and grace. Even then, when first imparted to the newly-believing soul, these Christward desires must be diligently nurtured and developed, because they are susceptible to sin, and may be subverted or diminished by the forces inherent in the old nature. Love for the Lord is a spiritual exercise into which the saints’ hearts need to be directed by the Holy Spirit (cf 2 Thessalonians 3:5) and thereafter kept secure (cf Jude 21).

There are many other sensations which may be mistaken for love toward Christ, and lesser emotions that are sometimes substituted for it. Knowing this, the Apostle Paul utters the prayer that, “*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen*” (Ephesians 6:24), and John in his epistle exhorts: “*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*” (1 John 3:18). Even in the act of loving the Saviour, it is possible for wrong motives, and false objects to arise.

For example, it is possible for believers to be mightily affected by the work of redemption and salvation which Christ has accomplished for them, in His incarnation, life, death and resurrection – and rightly so, for this is an eternally glorious theme. Or similarly, to take great delight in their spiritual benefits, and blessings with which they are daily laden. But to love the Lord primarily on account of the things that He has done – to love merely for His works’ sake, is not that sincerest form of love to which the Scriptures call us.

There are times in the Christian’s experience when the original ‘joy of salvation’ may wax and wane (cf Psalm 51:12); and occasions on which

a sense of present blessedness and good can be lost, on account of trials and tribulations. A love which depends on such positive experiences for its existence will falter and fail. The patriarch Job was endowed with a nobler form of love than this, such that, even in the deepest distress, he could say of the Lord, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before Him*" (Job 13:15-16). 'I shall not be so hypocritical as to quit my desires for Christ because of adversity. Though my lot be all affliction, I will maintain this affection; though He were to strike me down, yet would I love Him!'

Others there are, who read the promises of God's Word concerning the world that is to come, the delights of the life hereafter, where for the saints, are pleasures for evermore (cf Psalm 16:11); they hear of rewards in Heaven, of treasures above, of thrones and crowns and white robes, and overcome with the prospect of Glory, are moved in love toward the Saviour. Exceeding great and precious as these promises are, and worthy of eternal praise and gratitude, if they are the sole grounds of love for the Lord, that love is insufficient. It is the Giver, and not the gifts, that should be the object of spiritual affection.

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at Glory,
But on my King of Grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's Land." (Cousin)

The hymnwriter echoes the truth of Scripture concerning Heaven, that "*the Lamb is the light thereof*" (Revelation 21:24). He is the very brightness of glory, without whom, all its joys would be dim.

The Psalmist testified: *“I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me...”* (Psalm 116:1-2). Love toward the Saviour may originally be stimulated by the thought of those things from which we have been saved. The contemplation of that destruction from which the Lord’s people are delivered causes them to cleave to their Redeemer, as a rescued person clings instinctively to the rescuer. Yet this – almost involuntary – response is prone to rapid dissipation once the danger is past, and time elapses. No so for the true saint, whose love is sincere. As the verse from Psalms continues: *“...therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live”*. Turning our eyes away from the awful ‘pit whence we were digged’, onto the One whose strong arm has lifted us out, we find Him ‘altogether lovely’, and desire to be united to Him, as long as life endures.

This is the fundamental point: the **person** of Christ must be the chief object of the believers’ love. He is ever to be loved in Himself, and for Himself. The great salvation He has wrought, the depths from which He saves, the glory to which He brings, are secondary to the perfections of His being, and the beauties of His person. He is that One in whom there meet all the attributes of God, and the qualities of sinless, deathless humanity. He is Incarnate Deity and deified humanity. He is worthy of the adoration of every creature, from deepest Hell, through all the earth, to the highest pinnacle of Heaven.

We love Him, who first loved us – would that our love for Christ might emulate His toward us, and prove itself to be likewise unconditional, unreserved, unfading, unending.

“Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore:
Oh for grace to love Thee more.” (Cowper)