

Jubilee in The King's Forest

This is the first of a series of articles in which we stroll through the garden of Deity in the Paradise of the future. It will help us develop the eye of perception and faith, as we pause under each tree, open our Bibles, and enjoy the sheer pleasure of a study in the sublime surroundings of a land now transformed as "the garden of Eden".

Principle of Representation

God uses His natural creation to provide important lessons for the spiritual. Paul makes this point in 1Cor. 15:46, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual". Thus in Scripture the *Sun* is used to represent kings and emperors, the rulers of the political heavens (Mal. 4:2); the *Moon* becomes a symbol for the priesthood (Rev. 6:12), the arena of religious leadership; *Clouds* stand for many people in eminence (Heb. 12:1); *Animals* represent nations (Dan. 7), etc. Similarly, as we traverse the garden of Yahweh, we will find many *Plants, Trees and Flowers* — fit analogies for people great and small. Thus, Israel is "a vine out of Egypt" (Psa. 80:8); the saints are called "trees of righteousness" planted by God (Isa. 61:3); the "fig tree" represents the choicest of the nations (Lk. 21:29).

Of the 2,600 plant species known to grow in Israel, about 110 are named in Scripture. All of these portray spiritual lessons for those who care to walk along the pathway of divine parables.

Gardening is the first kind of occu-

pation recorded (Gen. 2:15), and the divine instruction to Adam was "to dress it and to keep it". Care, forethought, attention and diligence were to be expended upon it. The soil, then "very good" (ch. 1:31), would allow for wonderful growth as Adam enjoyed the environment of Yahweh.

The Family of the Forest

When the "plants of the forest" are viewed collectively, they form the paradise, or "garden" of Yahweh, comprised of a forest of immortals. Thus they are described by the greater Adam, the divine Bridegroom, in Song 4:12, "a garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse". As the Lord Jesus walks amongst the ecclesias, he is depicted as "gone down into his garden... to feed in the gardens" (ch. 6:2).

He desires to tend and care for his garden, to water, prune and improve it by his diligent husbandry. This is the parable of moral cultivation, through which the elect "garden of God" receives unmitigated blessings, both now and in the future: "thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not" (Isa. 58:11).

It is to this garden, that we now

wish to wander; to inspect the plants, to observe the husbandry, to learn the lessons of paradise.

The Hedge at the Edge

Our company has arrived at the entrance to the garden. A fine hedge encloses it on every side.

Ancient gardens were protected by hedges, or walls, such as this, to give beauty and protection to an area.

Appropriately, the *vineyard* of Israel was protected by a spiritual *hedge* in the parable of the Lord: “a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about...”

The Greek word for “hedge” is *phragmos*, used of the Law of Moses in Eph. 2:14, a beautiful, goodly protection for the whole nation (Rom. 7:12). The Scriptures continue to provide an essential security for the development of the household within (2Tim. 3:16).

The garden-parable will be represented in the glorious House of Prayer in Jerusalem, for the four majestic walls that encompass that holy place are like the *fence* that distinguishes those within from those outside (cp. Ezek. 44:9).

The Tower of the Watchman

As we enter the garden, we notice a huge edifice in the centre. It is the garden tower. In times past these were constructed of wood, to allow the watchman of the garden to overlook the area for marauders such as foxes or robbers of the fruits.

The tower in the garden of God is a substantial, high, solid structure, made of fine stones. It represents the company of the prophets (Ezek. 33:7), the groups of pioneer brethren, those who have been watchmen in the Brotherhood. They were there in the days of our probation, performing their important task of keeping a watchful lookout for dangers. This was no easy task in the far-off days of Noah, of Jeremiah, of Paul — who,

with many others, acted as watchtowers (cp. Acts 20:31).

Now, as we gather in the garden of God it seems difficult to remember those days of difficulty and danger, when tares abounded on all sides. But the presence of the watchtower reminds us of the past, and directs us to the “Name of Yahweh” where the righteous can run and be safe (Prov. 18:10).

There are four mighty towers, like watchtowers, on each corner of the House of Prayer in Jerusalem (Ezek. 46:21), representing the presence of the divine Guardian himself.

Twelve Sections in the Garden

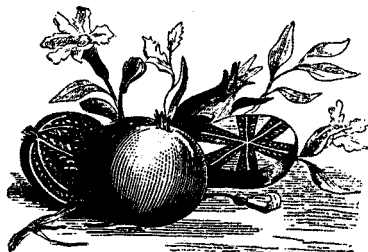
As we move through the garden-paradise, we observe the beautiful plants all around. They are the fruits of Yahweh’s husbandry, for He is the gardener who carefully tends, prunes and shapes the characters of His people to fit them for the eternal planting in paradise (Ezek. 28:13; Isa. 51:3).

The garden is set in twelve plots (Rev. 22:2). We stop awhile to consider the first tree on our tour of inspection. Under its welcome shade, we open our Bibles, and observe the features of this tree.

The Pomegranate

This tree, more than any other, symbolizes the fruits of Christ’s offering. It is appropriately the first of the trees we encounter.

We take the fruit to inspect its form. It is composed entirely of *white seeds!* Here is purity in multiplicity — a symbol of he who, by “making his soul an offering for sin” should “see



his *seed*" (Isa. 53:10), all developed from the foundation of faith in Abraham (Gal. 3:16,28). But the whiteness of the seeds are contrasted with the *blood-red juice* in which they are found. They have, of course, "washed their robes and made them *white* in the *blood* of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14) — certainly expressive of the foundation of redemption found in the atonement of Christ.

The seeds sit neatly in *twelve* segments, for therein is seen the fulness of spiritual Israel: "and I heard the number of them which were sealed... of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev. 7:4). Twelve is the number of divine government, in which the immortals now participate. We joy together in the great privilege shared in the garden of Yahweh.

Then we notice the startling colors of the fruit. It ripens to a *purple* color, signifying the royalty to which the saints have now been elevated (Rev. 5:9-10), for purple is comprised of the colors *blue* and *red* mixed: expressive of God (blue) manifest in flesh (red).

In Moses' day, the high priest had pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet woven on his garments. These colors speak of the *Word of Heaven, God Manifest in Flesh, and Sacrifice* (Ex. 28:33) — every principle being necessary and interdependent for spiritual fruit to flourish in paradise.

On the top of the pomegranate is a crown-shaped calyx. It represents the ultimate glory of the saints: "Thou hast made us unto our God *kings and priests* and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). This was the longing of every faithful servant in God's garden during the days of probation: "There is laid up for me a *crown* of righteousness" (2Tim. 4:8).

As we ponder the fruit before us, our minds scan the pages of Scripture. Remember how the pomegranates in their hundreds surmounted the pillars

of Solomon's temple, to prefigure the millennial reign of Christ (1Kgs. 7:18; a contrast to the temporary tabernacle that epitomized mortality and probation)! Remember the occasion when Saul procrastinated under a pomegranate tree (1Sam. 14:2)! That was the time when Jonathan and his armor-bearer engaged the enemy whilst Saul idled his time away. The pomegranate truly signifies the time of rest in the kingdom, but those days of past opportunity were necessary to that end (Heb. 4:8,11).

The medicinal properties of this fruit have been extolled from ancient times. It is a strong anthelmintic (worm cure), and thus speaks of the power of *spiritual healing*, an antidote to corruption. Job expressed this quality, stating, "and though... worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26). Now, gathered around the pomegranate tree in the Paradise of God are some of the "seed of Abraham" who survived the grave, and became a living testimony to the principles of the pomegranate.

We now sit under this tree in the glow of immortal health, no longer suffering the worm-condition of mortality, but full of vigor, strength and beauty. Our Bridegroom thus describes us: "thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate" (Song 4:3): pink and healthy, round and smooth; a health seen in the *temples*, for our mind and thinking processes are now full of spiritual health.

Another Plant in the Garden

But there are many plants in this paradise that now engage our attention as we look around, so we arise to continue our tour.

Here, nearby, is a humble plant, but yet a parable of important principles in spiritual development. Of it, we will comment in our next article.

— Stan Snow.

Small and Large in the Garden of God

In this second chapter, we continue our parabolic journey through the King's Forest of the future, to inspect the wonderful plants that abound on all sides. We see unobtrusive bushes alongside majestic trees — all forming part of the glorious environment of the Redeemed. The garden is one of exhortation, exposition and beauty, as each tree represents the divine principles that are then found in the perfected saints, who rejoice together in the paradise promised from the foundation of the world.

LEAVING the pomegranate tree under which we rested in our last article, we observe an unassuming plant springing from the wall beside the garden path. It is the *hyssop*, which in olden times, engaged the attention of the wisest of men, Solomon (1Kgs. 4:33). But there is more to this “weed” than might at first be imagined.

Its Hebrew name is *ezowb*. The word appears ten times in the O.T., a number that signifies *human completeness*. Thus, it speaks of the fulfilment of humility in flesh: the principle for which the divine Word was given.

We know the plant as *Origanum*, or Syrian Hyssop, which grows in bunches, and is an excellent sprinkler, as the hair on its stems prevents coagulation of blood. This feature was important in its use as the means by which the blood of the Passover was sprinkled in accordance with the divine requirements (Exod. 12:22).

What a striking lesson is here

revealed of humility with sacrifice. Hyssop speaks of cleansing on the basis of blood-sprinkling: *Humility will cleanse if associated with the Lamb's blood*. The principle is expressed by David: “Purge me with hyssop” (Psa. 51:7).

Hyssop has a pungent taste, rather like peppermint, with a hot sensation followed by a cool, refreshing flavour in the mouth. Every disciple must taste hyssop — the fiery trial (hot peppermint) of suffering in mortality (Acts 3:18) before “times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (v. 19).

The mouth waters when chewing hyssop, quenching the thirst. Similarly, humility is a characteristic of those who *thirst* after righteousness, for they will be satisfied (Mat. 5:6).

Hyssop on the Stake

Jesus was offered hyssop to quench his thirst in the midst of his great trial (Jn. 19:29). There, held up for all to see, was the epitome of *humility*, whose *spiritual thirst* was

satisfied. The Law shadowed this in the slaying of the red heifer (young cow). A bunch of hyssop was thrown into the fire which consumed the heifer (Num. 19:6), and whose ashes, with water, cleansed from the ceremonial defilement of death — clearly pointing to the victory over death by Christ's crucifixion, as part of his life of humility.

This humble plant grows in the clefts of the rocks and chinks of walls. This, too, is significant, for "walls" represent people (Ezek. 8:8-9), and in this case, a humble people: spiritual Israel. Its white flowers obviously depict Righteousness (Rev. 19:8).

In ancient days hyssop was associated with the cure for leprosy (Lev. 14:4-6). Hence the cure for sin and sin nature (both represented in the leprous condition), is based on humility — a lesson every saint learns in their mortal probation.

Notice that the height of this hyssop is about 61 cms (24 inches). This is equivalent to the kingdom measure of the *Royal Cubit* — appropriate to the Royal Humility of our King and Saviour. Notice, also, the multitudinous stalks branching from the one root! They speak of the Multitudinous Christ, stemming out of the root of David (Isa. 11:1).

But the wise Solomon not only spoke of the humble hyssop, for "he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1Kgs. 4:33). This leads us to our next enquiry, the majestic Cedar tree that stands tall beside the pathway a little further on. We now proceed to sit and reflect under its shade.

The King of the Forest

The cedar has long been the symbol of royal majesty in the plant kingdom. Its name means "to be firm", a reference to the massive firm roots of

the tree under which we sit. It is the word *erez*, mentioned over seventy times in the Bible. In its feminine form, *erezah*, it signifies a collection of cedars, an appropriate symbol for the collective bride of Christ.

The cedar has always been a mountain tree, and thus represents those who aspire to higher, heavenly, royal things. It thrives in stony ground, for it has a firm root system, like those who are unaffected by "contrary winds of doctrine", and who walked to the kingdom through the rough places of mortality. They were firmly founded on the principles of the Truth, and now, in this Garden of God, rejoice in their heavenly status. The tree makes good use of moisture from the clefts in the rocks, just as the saints in their probation, draw water from their Christ-Rock (1Cor. 10:4).

Now, in the Millennium, cedars abound even in the deserts: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar" (Isa. 41:19); "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee" (ch. 60:13). Though cedars were not formerly found beside waters, now, in this transformed land, "Yahweh hath planted... cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:6). This panorama of beauty is everywhere present in the Garden of God as the great King presides over the horticulture of the Millennium.

The cedar is difficult to burn — a contrast with the "thorns cut up and burned in the fire" (Isa. 33:12). The cedar is claimed to be worm-proof, as its scent repels moths, and in this it is the antithesis to corruption (worms), thus speaking of immortality. The scent is perfected after the tree is hewn down, revealed in the accomplished sacrifice of the Lord, which was acceptable to the Father.

The cedars typify the saints; thorns speak of the wicked. The cedars stand tall (Isa. 2:13) speaking of the spiritu-

al height of the faithful, and spreading (Ezek. 31:3) their shielding and overshadowing influence over the nations.

Means of Salvation

When the priest took “cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop” (Lev. 14:4), the cedar would have comprised the handle of the sprinkling instrument, whilst the scarlet wool tied the hyssop and the living bird together. All this was for the cleansing of the leper, who represents sin which resides in the nature of mortality. In this ritual cleansing for sin, on the basis of *humility* (hyssop) and the sacrifice of Christ’s *blood* (scarlet wool), an effective compound was provided for the healing of the leper. This represented the ultimate state when sin would be completely eradicated.

Thus the day of small things (hyssop) is connected to the day of great achievements (cedar), with everything in its own order: “the suffering before the glory” (1Pet. 5:10).

One important feature of the ritual of the red heifer made it unique amongst the sacrifices of the law. It remained efficacious to cleanse long after the death of the animal. Thus, it spoke clearly of the sacrifice of Christ.

The people, in Moses’ day, were required to obtain the ashes of the red heifer, and place them in a “clean place”, in order to be drawn upon as needed, which may well have been some eighty-five times per day, because there were six hundred thousand men, and probably about the same number of women, who died over the thirty-eight year period of the wilderness probation. If they had kept the Law, each would require the water of separation (Num. 19:13) — dramatically portraying the *one sacrifice for ever* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we sit under the cedar tree, reminiscing upon these important principles of the days of our probation. What a significant tree! Associated with the ritual cleansing from death; sweet-smelling; anti-corrupting; a royal tree. So it types the immortal “kings from a sun’s rising” (Rev. 16:12), in this day of great things, a day of immortality, now enjoyed in the Garden of God.

The lovely morning draws on. Over there, further along the path, is a beautiful lush green fig tree. We make our way to it, to examine its secrets, which we will consider in our next article.

—Stan Snow

The Truth Discovered

Logos believes that the Truth has been discovered and presented for the obedience of faith in the system of belief brought to light by the pioneers of the Christadelphian movement. The business in hand, therefore, is not the discovery of the basic elements of Truth, for they have been revealed, but the application of them. As Brother Roberts once wrote: “The apostles did not go about asking, ‘What is Truth?’ That was a heathen’s question. The apostles occupied themselves in preaching the Truth. That is the business of all who follow the apostles. If some do not know it, or doubt it, or are dim about it, let them not insist on others getting down into the bog where they flounder. If they won’t allow those who stand on the firm ground to help them out, let them, at least, cease their invitations for the people on the firm ground to come down into the welter where they are. Their invitations will be regarded only by the simple”.

—H. P. Mansfield

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD

Under the Shadow of the Fig Tree

In the pictures presented through this series of articles, the saints enjoy the parables of the King's Forest in the Millennium, as they experience the reality of what was formerly promised in the Word of Life. Now, they rejoice in the true meaning of all the goodness of Yahweh's providence. The lessons that they have learned in life continue to be expressed in the parables of nature — and, unhindered by mortality and its pains, they can, at last, appreciate the divine parables.

HAVING enjoyed the sheer majesty of the tall cedar (see page 114), the group of saints move on to the lush green fig tree, growing in the corner of the garden of Paradise (Lk. 13:6).

It is a large tree, which could easily shelter a shepherd and his flock. Indeed, a company of three hundred could sit in its shade, for the tree covers an area of at least fifteen cubits (nine metres, or 30 ft).

The saints consider the parable presented! It is the first fruit tree mentioned by name in the Bible: in Gen. 3:7. Its leaves became a covering for Adam and Eve in Eden. Its Hebrew name is *teenah*, with the same consonants as the word *taanah*, which signifies fruitfulness.

The word is also used for the mating lust of the wild she ass in Jer. 2:24, "A wild ass... in her occasion (*taanah*), who can turn her away?"

Both the ass and the fig are sym-

bols of Israel. Both represent the *seed* of animal and plant life: a parable of the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham. This was typified in the action of the Lord Jesus who rode upon an ass into Jerusalem (Mat. 21:5; Zech. 9:9), and who judged the fig tree in the way (Mat. 21:19).

But, unlike the fig tree under which the saints now gather in this parable, the fig tree of Israel was fruitless, without even seed, and therefore cursed (Mk. 11:13-14). From a distance it was a tree of promise, but upon inspection it was a tree of disappointment, its large leaves hiding its emptiness. One of the Gentiles who lived in this land before these days of millennial glory, remarked: "The reason why he (Jesus) might legitimately (so to speak) seek fruit from this particular tree at that early day, was the ostentatious show of leaves. The fig fruit often comes with, or even before the leaves, and especially on the early

kind (of fig tree). If there was no fruit on this leafy tree, it might justly be condemned as barren; and hence the propriety of the lesson it was made to teach — that those who put forth in profusion only the leaves of empty profession are nigh unto cursing” (Thompson, *The Land and the Book*, p. 349).

Symbol of Concealment

The fig tree is a symbol for the act of *hiding*, as displayed in the events of Eden. Believers may have easily concealed their true state in the day of probation, but such things were revealed in the day of judgment, as they will again at the end of this millennial age for the mortals now in our care. The shade of the fig tree (under which we now gather) represents either the divine protection of providence, or the deceptive clothing of the flesh! Thus, the fig tree is a notable symbol for Israel — both good and bad — for Jer. 24:2 declares: “One basket had very good figs... the other basket had very naughty figs which could not be eaten they were so bad”.

The fig tree hides its fruit until they are ripened by the sun. So, too, do mortal men: they hide the evidence of their “bad fruit” or emptiness, until the “sun of righteousness” comes to reveal their fruit or lack thereof.

One variety of fig in Israel produces a fruit crop which lasts through the winter, after the leaves have fallen; i.e., it provides a continuous production. This fig represents the “Israelites indeed” who produce the “fruits of the spirit” throughout their probation.

Some say that the fig produces fruit upon its old wood (trunk and older branches) before it regenerates its new wood. Similarly, the wisdom of the true Israelite extends from the “hoary head” to those young in the truth.

This continuously bearing fig tree

has always been regarded as the most fruitful of all the trees — a reminder of those miraculous trees we recently saw at the House of Prayer for all nations, and which “bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded their fruit every month”. Those literal trees bear a crop of fruit every month (Ezek. 47:12), and typify the immortal saints, who, as “trees of righteousness” heal the nations (Rev. 22:2; Isa. 61:3).

Fruits for Healing & Internal Beauty

In this sublime garden, all the plants are special, with some unique characteristics about them. Every time we come to another species, as they seem to be studying the most special plant in the kingdom! So it is with the fig tree. Besides its other qualities, it has a remarkable medicinal value. “And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he (Hezekiah) recovered” (2Kgs. 20:7). As the application of the actual figs (representing the divine healing power) healed the king then, so the Hope of Israel, placed on the spiritually weak and ill will bring health and vigor. Especially is this so in the application of “sound doctrine” (Tit. 1:9; Gr. *hugiaino*, lit. healthy doctrine).

The flower of the fig is unusual; it is internal. The fruit is really a swollen flower, and one must examine the *inside* of the fruit to discover it. Similarly, Yahweh looks upon the heart of man to discover *internal beauty*, as expressed to Samuel: “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart” (1Sam. 16:7).

The fig tree requires some tending, or “keeping” (Prov. 27:18), in order to bear proper fruit. So, too, with those whom Yahweh “tends” carefully for their good (Lk. 13:6-9).

The Early Fig

Because we all speak Hebrew in

this millennial age (Zeph. 3:9; Isa. 19:18), we quickly recognise that the words for “early fig” and “firstborn” have the same consonants: *bekirah* and *bakkurah*. Perhaps there is a connection. The immortal saints who now rule this earth and bring such blessings upon it, are “firstborns” being “firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4). They are come “to the general assembly and ecclesia of *firstborns*” (Heb. 12:23). We are firstborns and firstfruits in that we precede the rest of Christ’s great harvest to be gathered in at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:5,12).

The Wild Fig

When we visited the House of Prayer the other day, we met Amos who once “was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit” (Amos 7:14). Though he was a cultivator of figs, Yahweh called him aside to cultivate the “Israel fig” instead. “Sycamore” is the Hebrew *yasar* (mg. wild fig) which literally means “to chastise”, especially as in the correction by parents (Prov. 19:18), or of men when disciplined by Yahweh (Lev. 26:28).

Amos’ occupation was significant, for “gatherer” is the word *balac*, meaning “to pinch”, a process necessary to ripen them. The method used to beat (or “chastise”) the cultivated figs was to gather wild fig branches and strike the figs so as to penetrate them and disperse the pollen.

The personal life of Amos was a type of the mission of the Lord. Christ came into the world to gather the fruits of Yahweh’s orchard. Consequent upon his rejection by the nation

of Israel, he “cultivated” the crop by pricking, or chastising (beating) them with a wild fig branch (the Roman armies in A.D. 70).

Many centuries elapsed before the Israel Fig bore fruit, as was predicted by the Lord. He said of that barren fig tree generation: “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever (lit., to the age; i.e., until the millennium: Mat. 21:19).

As we sit under this fig tree in the Garden of Paradise, able to see Israel’s glory, and the fulfilment of the Lord’s words, we remember that the nation had to languish for two thousand years until Christ came to save them from the Gog of the North (Dan. 11:45; 12:1).

Being Covered By Faith

Again, as we relax under this superb fig tree, it is difficult to visualise the barren one that Jesus cursed (Mat. 21:19). But the lessons of that event can be appreciated by the mortals of every age. Jesus cursed the tree, and on the following day its withered state was observed by his disciples. The lesson then taught was: The Israel Fig (which had not responded to care—Lk. 13:6-9) was not to be then pruned, but *uprooted* from the land altogether (Mat. 3:10). How significant that, immediately after passing by the dried tree, Jesus discoursed upon *faith* (Mk. 11:22). This is the quality in mortals of every generation, which is pleasing to Yahweh (Heb. 11:6). Now, beneath the shadowing fig tree, the fulness of our own faith is experienced, in the joys of this Paradise of God. — *Stan Snow*.

Not a day should be allowed to pass without us doing something for God. He can be served in many ways, and by the busiest, We serve Him by an exemplary discharge of the common duties of life; by being kind, courteous, upright, sober-minded, and virtuous. We do so by our activities within the ecclesia, and by our efforts to extend a knowledge of the Truth. We perform His will by encouraging those who labor with us, that they might be stimulated to continue their activities. — H.P.M.

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE FUTURE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD — PART 4

The Joy of the Fruitful Vine

As the saints in the Kingdom contemplate the Jubilee in the King's Forest, they observe many parables in the plants abounding everywhere. Concerning this parable of the saints Brother Thomas remarked that "the literal paradise (in the garden) differs from these in that its literal-ity is also symbolical and allegorical of things pertaining to that great incorporation of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel, styled by Daniel and other sacred writers, the Saints" (Eureka, vol. 1, page 218). Again, "every individual of the Bride adorned... is therefore a constituent of His Paradise (Garden)" (vol. 5, page 359).

THE saints move from the fig tree (see page 136-138), observing that this garden in Paradise is alive with color on this delightful day. The bright green leaves dance in the gentle breeze, bathed in sunlight, a veritable spectacle of life.

The Vine: Notable Symbol of Israel

Before us is a vineyard, full of life. It is reminiscent of the familiar scene in the inner temple of the House of Prayer for all nations, for there, as we looked upwards, was a ceiling of vines with the same attractive green leaves, luminous and transparent to the light above (Ezek. 41:25-26, where the words "thick planks" should be "tree shades"; H. Sulley says "arborial shade"). We were truly under "booths" as the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated (Isa. 4:6; "tabernacle" = Heb. *sukkah*, a booth).

Though the scene before us is beautiful, the spiritual import surpasses it, for this vineyard is a symbol of Yahweh's people: Israel. We remember the words of Psa. 80:8, "Thou hast

brought a vine out of Egypt: Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it".

The sole purpose of the vine is to bear fruit: "Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree... shall wood be taken thereof to do any work?... Is it meet for any work... it was meet for no work". A vine that bears no fruit is useless; it has no other purpose to man, and in this peculiarity, it is different from all other plants. Spiritually, the lesson teaches that Israel was brought into being to bear fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), apart from which they were of no use to Yahweh, but, like a fruitless vine, fit only for burning (Ezek. 15:4,6).

Cover Illustration: A beautiful vista of the Vineyard spreading across the valley is evidence of the divine blessing and a lesson for faithfulness. It is an example of the Lord's parable of the Vine and the Branches, as expounded in this article. Combined illustrations provided by Brethren E. Hubbard and G. Hollamby.

The wood of the vine is knotty, completely unsuitable for carpentry or building purposes. Similarly, the sinful nature of fallen mortal man is “knotty”, “twisted” and “bent”; thus of no use (Psa. 51:5; Mat. 15:19), except a man produce, by faith, the fruits of the Spirit (Heb. 4:2).

Fruit of the Vine in Clusters

Look over there at those tremendous bunches of ripening grapes! They remind us of those times when there was “a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff” (Num. 13:23). This luscious fruit, being in clusters, is a parable of the ecclesia through the ages. If one is diseased it affects others in the bunch — just as in the ecclesia when from some “their word will eat as doth a canker” (2Tim. 2:17).

But the healthy clusters are crushed to produce a fermented wine, a symbol of the new life in Christ: “they put new wine into new bottles” (Mat. 9:17), symbolic of the “new covenant in my blood” (1Cor. 11:25). As the grapes are bruised, so the saints in probation are chastised: “despise not the chastening of the Lord” (Heb. 12:5). The “bruising” of the saints results in a new life through Christ Jesus, bringing great joy, as when, with gladness and singing, the husbandmen tread out the grapes (Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30).

A Vine Out of Egypt

In Psa. 80:1-16, the graceful metaphor of the “Israelitish Vineyard” speaks of the vine being removed from Egypt and planted in the land of Canaan for a better soil, a more favorable environment in a land cleared of thistles (Canaanites), where the “Vine” flourished for a time. Proper clearing of the ground is important in the preparation for a vineyard. Accordingly, Yahweh cast out the heathen nations (v. 8).

As we now walk through the area, notice how beautiful and regular are the rows of vines, stretching away into the distance. Have you considered the similarity to the Tribal Cantonnments of Israel’s settlement in this land? The nation is settled in twelve neat rows, or cantons, one for each tribe (Ezek. 48), reflecting the vine-rows now before us.

This vineyard has been properly sheltered and supported, to allow the vines to take deep root. Likewise, Yahweh provides laws and institutions for the “Israel Vine”, giving every care for its protection and growth. In the past, God’s great care was not appreciated by the vine: “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isa. 5:4). However, all that has now changed with the “spirit of grace and of supplications” that Yahweh poured upon Israel at His manifestation to them at the time of Armageddon (Zech. 12:10).

The Vineyard Fills the Land

In this wondrous millennial age, Israel is now an exemplary nation, as the Gentiles “see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory”, for Yahweh has made “Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. 62:2,7). Consequently, Israel now is established in the land.

The natural vine illustrates this in its manner of cultivation, for a vine will multiply when the gardener plants a cutting from an old vine tree, leaving a shoot at both top and bottom. The lower shoot provides a root, and the upper shoot provides the leaves — so one tree eventually becomes a vineyard. In like fashion, Yahweh “planted” Israel with care, so that they “filled the land” (Psa. 80:9).

See how these splendid vines form shade for visitors, both here in the Paradise Garden, in the great Temple

at Zion, and around the houses of the people. As Yahweh blessed Israel in the past, now today, in greater degree, the nations of the earth shelter under Israel's security and "shade", as "out of Zion shall go forth the Law" (Isa. 2:3).

As this vineyard stretches forth into the distance, so we can envisage the way in which the Israel Vineyard becomes the shelter of the nations: "The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars" (Psa. 80:10). Similarly, in this millennial age, Israel has spread from the Mediterranean in the west to the Euphrates on the east: "she sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river" (v. 11).

It was not always so. Previously, under the Mosaic Law, Israel "brought forth wild grapes" (Isa. 5:4). "Wild grapes" (Heb. *beushym*) are poisonous, foul-smelling berries; a pernicious nuisance in the vineyards. They emit a strong, offensive smell in the winepress. Little wonder that Yahweh gave that "vine" to the fire: "As the vine tree... which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Ezek. 15:6).

A Lesson for All Ages

As we walk through these rows of vines, the words of the Lord spring to mind: "I am the vine, ye are the branches... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (Jn. 15:5-6). The branches are dependent upon the sturdier vine trunk, but when separated they quickly brown, wither and die. The branches represent the saints in probation; they have no life apart from the vine itself. Even the "good" branches need pruning to produce worthwhile fruit. So, also, the saints must be "pruned" by the trials of ecclesial life (Heb. 12:8) to develop the fruits of faith.

The vine has an unusual trait that

puzzles farmers, but is of significance to those who have developed the mind of the spirit. The same plant can simultaneously produce fertile and sterile branches! Similarly, on the Christ-vine can be seen both true and false brethren (2Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4; Jn. 6:70). This is all the more remarkable as the good branches on the same vine can grow up to four metres in a season.

Now consider the leaves, with their five-fingered lobes, the number of grace. See how the grapes contain two seeds in each of two cells: the Jew and Gentile elements of faith. Notice how the vines love to climb, aspiring, as it were, to higher things (Col. 3:2). Unlike avocados, bananas, and some other fruits, grapes will only ripen on the vine: "Except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (Jn. 15:4).

Thus the vine is appropriate for, and fitted to, the picture of Paradise.

Two Sorts of Vines; Two Sorts of Men

Experiencing the wonder and delight of this Paradise Garden, it is difficult to remember that not all vines are noble. Of His vine Yahweh declared: "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed" (Jer. 2:21).

Yet the vine is capable of being bitter, wild, fruitless; even a "vine of Sodom" (Deut. 32:32). At times Israel became the fruitless variety: "how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?" (Jer. 2:21).

Notice, also, how bent and twisted are the vine plants. This is emphasized in one of the Hebrew names for the vine: *Gephen*, meaning, to be bent. And this is the name given to the *fruitful* vine! Therefore, the lesson is that all the sons of Adam, including the Lord Jesus, had to contend with, and endure, this sin-biased nature in the days of probation.

A second name for the vine is the Hebrew *Sorek*, meaning a choice vine; a noble and superior kind (see Isa. 5:2). The word literally means “to inter-twine”, as seen in the superb vine before us. Spiritually, the ecclesial-vine of Yahweh is inter-twined in lives and efforts as members labor together in His vineyard.

The third Hebrew word for the vine is *Nazir*, meaning a consecrated vine — one which is unpruned, in the sabbath years of rest (i.e., the seventh, and the Jubilee fiftieth; Lev. 25:5,11). It is the word for the unshaven (unpruned) Nazarite also, as well as denoting a “prince”. This vine speaks of the *separated* “Vine and its branch-

es”, even Christ and his brethren in the aspect of rest during this millennial jubilee in the King’s forest, when probation is past, and the time for pruning is over: “Thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land... the sabbath of the land” (Lev. 25:5-6).

We move from the vineyard now, for over there is a magnificent palm tree standing erect above the rest of the garden.

On the way some fascinating smaller plants cannot be ignored: the mint, anise, cummin — and especially, the intriguing mandrake nearby. We will have a closer look in our next article.

— Stan Snow

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD — PART 4

The Medicinal Mandrake

In their imaginary walk through the King's Forest of the future, the saints move from the glorious beauty of the vine and its fruit, to see other trees and plants which flourish in this part of Paradise. Nearby is a little plant — though small it is yet intriguing. It is the mandrake. We stop to contemplate its spiritual significance, and to enjoy the exquisite fragrance of its fruit.

THE mandrake is sometimes called the *Love Plant*; its fruit is described by the ancient Greeks as *Love Apples*, and by the Arabs *The Devil's Apple*. The name is appropriate, for not only is it aphrodisiac, but the shape of its roots bears a remarkable resemblance to the human body. Its Hebrew name is *Duwday*, from a root word meaning, "to boil, to love".

The word indicates "a boiling pot", and by this means **healing** ointments were made. Is it not remarkable that so many plants of the Bible have healing properties! Remember Gilead's Balm, similarly made and famous for its healing powers: "Is there no balm in Gilead... no physician there?" (Jer. 8:22).

But Yahweh is the true physician, as Israel was told: "I am Yahweh that healeth thee" (Exod. 15:26) — a principle revealed in the parable of these plants.

Healing at the Temple Gates

Did you observe this amazing little plant amongst all manner of trees that are found beside the gates of the House of Prayer?

Some are of outstanding fragrance: "The mandrakes give a smell, and at

our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old... (Song 7:13). Other trees of healing are there also: "And by the river... shall grow all trees... and the leaf thereof for *medicine*" (Ezek. 47:12). These wonderful trees, able to heal the "bruises and sores" of the mortal partakers (see mg) speak in parable of the new law that goes forth "out of Zion, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). This new law is a spiritual medicine for the nations, healing them of the sinful conditions of centuries past (Jer. 16:19).

Mandrakes contain aphrodisiacs and sedatives; to the Greeks they were known as a fertility drug. Belief in

The small Mandrake plant is mentioned five times in Gen. 30, and once in Song of Solomon 7:13. It was obviously a rare plant, with a large tap root, bluish-green flowers and leaves like a primrose. Its yellow plum-like fruits invariably lie in the middle of a rosette of leaves.



The leaf, flower and root of the mandrake bush.

their love potency is seen in the episode described in Gen. 30:14-16, when Leah and Rachel negotiated over Reuben's mandrakes. Rachel was desperate to have a child, and felt that the mandrakes could assist her desire. But it was Leah who conceived in answer to prayer, not mandrakes (Gen. 30:17).

But what is the lesson? Notice the rich purple blossoms on the bush before us — so the mandrakes we saw at the Temple Gates speak of the **royal seed of Abraham**, everywhere evident and enjoying immortality in the Paradise now re-established.



Mandrake or "love apples" with fruit.

The Mint, Anise, Cummin and Rue

Nearby are several small plants, mentioned by the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh when he condemned the leaders of the ecclesia: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the law" (Mat. 23:23). In fact, the law did not require such tithes. It only legislated for tithes of revenue or income. Hence these "petty martyrs" were concentrating on the minuscule, and neglecting the large and weighty principles of character seen in "judgment, mercy and faith".

All these plants have **medicinal** properties. **Mint** (Gr. *heduosmon*, meaning "sweet scented") is used

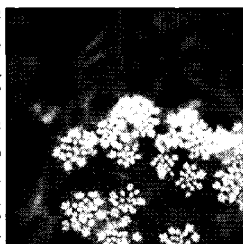


in cooking, for perfume and for medicinal purposes. It is good for the intestines and is thus a parable of **healthy** emotions. The

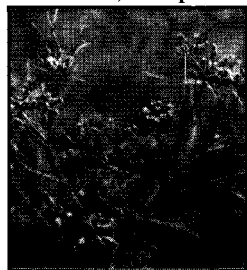
Master searches the inner feelings and thoughts when he "tries the reins (kidneys)" (Rev. 2:23). Ultimately Yahweh will become the "saving health among all nations" (Psa. 67:2).

Similarly, the **Anise** (Gr. *anethon*, meaning "unconquerable") is also called the Dill plant, and contains an aromatic seed with **golden** flowers,

picturing the most precious attribute of a "tried faith" (1Pet. 1:7). The seeds are also used medicinally, providing warm and stimulating properties to the intestines: "put on... *bowels* of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind" (Col. 3:12).



Now we approach the **Cummin** plant (Gr. *kuminon*, from the Hebrew *kammon*, meaning "to lay up; thus, to store salt"). It speaks of preservation;



of the prevention of corruption. Of his disciples the Lord declared: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Mat. 5:13). This umbrella-like plant is

shaped in a cluster, like the Menorah lampstand. It is a delicate plant, not to be threshed like corn, but given gentler treatment by the farmer, as Isaiah declared: "neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin" (Isa. 28:27).

Hence the wise farmer gives attention to his treatment of different sorts of grains, as our heavenly Father uses care with the "good seed" who are the children of the kingdom (Mat. 13:38). Thus, all tribulations used by Providence are perfectly measured and appropriate to every need. Actually, the English word *tribulation* comes from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. What important lessons come from such a delicate plant!

Over here a little way is the **Rue** plant. Its Greek name is *peganon*, and it is a condiment, giving flavor to food as well as being medicinal. When eaten it has a beneficial tranquilizing effect, relieving violent emotional

excitement. Hence it speaks of **peace** in the inner man: "Behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa. 37:37), for he is governed by the "Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6).

Observe the **golden** flowers, yet another reminder of the *tried faith* that is essential to please Yahweh (Heb. 11:6).

Each of these humble herbs have valuable medicinal properties: they give health to the "bowels" (2Cor. 6:12; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12), and teach the value of healthy hearts (minds) and emotions in the Truth, for "Yahweh looketh upon the heart" (1Sam. 16:7). Israel did not care for these qualities of mercy, faith and true judgment, and brought upon themselves swift destruction.

The lessons of the humble herb must form part of the spiritual life, that we might manifest the divine qualities in all the circumstances that come upon us.

— Stan Snow.

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD — PART 5

The Upright Palm Tree

The saints wander through the imaginary King's Forest of the future age, noting the parable of the plants — the remarkable characteristics of the physical creation that teach important lessons concerning the spiritual. As a contrast to the small shrubs and plants of our last article (pages 213-215), we see ahead an outstanding group of trees standing above the rest of the garden. Their shade is inviting. We sit thereunder to enjoy another parable of paradise.

THE palm tree features prominently in the paradise garden of Christ's millennial reign. It reminds us of the outstanding history of Israel, and the ancient Feast of Tabernacles. The law instructed: "Ye shall take you... branches of palm trees... and ye shall rejoice before Yahweh your God seven days" (Lev. 23:40).

Observe how the palms **lift up their heads**, exalted, as it were above all others. They symbolise the saints in glory, led by our Lord: "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he **lift up the head**" (Psa. 110:7). The Master first "drank of the brook" when, as a weeping willow, he suffered and sorrowed with humanity; but later, raised to immortality, he could "lift up the head" in exaltation.

The Palms at Christ's Temple

The Hebrew word for the palm tree is *tamar*, meaning, to be erect: an appropriate symbol for the saints who have "risen with Christ". Like Job, they are "upright" (Job 1:1) and spiritually erect. They are represented in the palm-like pillars in the House of

Prayer for all Nations: "And upon each post were palm trees (Heb. *timmorah*, palm-like pillars)" (Ezek. 40:16); "And it (the entrances to the inner temple circle) was made with cherubim and palm trees (*timmorah*)" (ch. 41:18).

Now, in the garden, under the splendid grove of palm trees, we discuss the unique qualities of the palm, discerning the Bible principles: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree... Those that be planted in the house of Yahweh shall flourish in the courts of our God... they shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psa. 92:12-14).

The immortalised Bride of Christ is thus described: "how pleasant art thou, O love... thy stature is like to a palm tree" (Song 7:7). Like the Bride, the palm tree is tall and upright; constantly green and flourishing; strong, supple, providing shade. It has a head that is a crown of beauty, laden with fruit, even in old age. Each characteristic is reflected in the ecclesia of the saints — it provides shade and comfort for those about (1Cor. 14:3; 2Cor.

1:4), producing fruits of the Spirit unto eternity.

Ancient Symbol of Israel

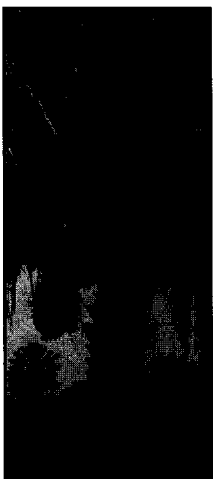
From ancient times the date palm has been identified with the land of Israel, being engraved upon Greek and Roman coins. In Judges 4:5 Deborah sat under the palm tree, which served in her poetry as a symbol of upright stature, justice and righteousness. The trees and leaves were used as motifs by king Solomon in temple engravings and sculptures. In the Capernaum synagogue have been found some friezes on which are carved palm branches (3rd century AD). The Maccabees (2nd century BC) used the palm as the emblem of victory on their coins, while Roman coins of the first century AD depicted a woman seated under a palm as an image for the captured Judea.

A Parable of Righteousness

The palm tree grows to a height of thirty or more cubits (sixty feet; eighteen metres), a towering tree: speaking of spiritual stature.

The tree lives to a great age, up to two hundred years: "As the days of a tree are the days of My people" (Isa. 65:22): speaking of longevity and immortality.

It has many uses. It provides a palm wine: speaking of joy and rejoicing. It is used for preservation by embalming: speaking of incorruptibility by the overcoming of flesh-nature. Its fruit is nutritious and delicious: speaking of the spiritual food gained by laboring and abounding in the Word (Jn. 6:27; 1Tim. 5:17). The tree begins to bear fruit at the age of five years (the number of grace), and the tree flowers in the spring (a symbol of the resurrection), with the fruit ripening at the end of summer, with the



warmth and power of the sun (the Lord Jesus Christ).

The growth of the palm tree is not generally affected by drought or flood, and therefore exists in the desert environment, and alongside rivers and beaches. Similarly, the saints "grow in grace" (2Pet. 3:18), and are not overwhelmed by flood or persecution (Mat. 7:25). Being a supple tree, it can withstand the storms and winds — as saints challenge the withering effect of false doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

According to the historian Gibbon, the desert natives have three hundred and sixty uses for the valuable palm tree. Similarly the saints are uniquely precious and useful in the Master's service. "They shall be Mine ... in that day when I make up My jewels" (Mal. 3:17).

Twelve Wells and Seventy Palms

We recall the time when Israel came from Egypt to the oasis of Elim (Exod. 15:27). There were seventy palm trees surrounding the twelve wells of water: a parable of the refreshing character of the millennium (Rev. 7:9). The word *Elim* signifies a place where "*mighty ones*" are gathered together: the immortal saints. There are found the twelve wells of water, representing the tribes of Israel drawing the living water of the Word; and the seventy palm trees, representing the Nations (Gen. 10 lists seventy names of the Gentiles) who gather around Israel. They are all "trees of righteousness" who are to grace the glorious picture of the kingdom and respond to the laws and wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

— Stan Snow.

*Next issue: The Fruitful Olive,
and the Sons of Oil.*

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE FUTURE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD — PART 6

The Golden Olive

As the saints stroll along the splendid garden path in the Paradise of God, they notice the ubiquitous Olive tree — a symbol of many principles of the Spirit Word, whose characteristics teach vital lessons about the divine character. We stop to examine its remarkable appearance.

THE trunk of the olive tree is **gnarled, twisted** and **inter-twined** within itself — a graphic dramatization of the tortuous history of Israel throughout the centuries, foretold in God's Word (Deut. 28). Its variegated leaves speak of the divine blessings given to the nation: the **deep green** upper sides of their leaves speak of divine prosperity (Psa. 52:8), whilst the **silver** undersides remind us of the principles of redemption (Num. 3:46,50).

A grove of olive trees has been described as "a silver sea along the base of the hills, climbing their ascending terraces, perfectly charming" (Thompson, *The Land and the*

Book). It is an absolute joy to walk through this millennial grove, with the trees clothed with flowers, soon to be bowed down with large and oil-enriched berries.

The Light of the World

The Hebrew for olive is *zayith*, from a root "to shine". As olive oil was used for illumination in the past, so it is again in this millennial age. It represents the **spiritual illumination** that emanates from Zion (Mic. 4:2).

The vision of Zechariah depicted the dual source of that light, with spiritual "olives" picked from both Jew and Gentile "trees": "Then answered I and said unto him, What are these two olive trees, upon the right side of the



As a *Logos* Tour travelled along a highway in northern Israel it came across two grand old olive trees, known to the guides as "Abraham" and "Sarah".

Standing supreme over time and place, the two trees illustrate the enduring qualities of faith and works that must be manifested by the spiritual seed of Abraham and Sarah who will ultimately inherit the earth.

candlestick (lampstand) and upon the left side... then said he, These are the two anointed ones (mg. *sons of oil*)” (Zech. 4:11,14).

Here, in symbol, are the saints, taken out of both branches of the human race. Paul reminded the Gentile branches of their exalted position: “If some of the branches be broken off (*the Jewish section*), and thou (*the Gentile believers*), being a wild olive tree wert grafted in among them...” These saints are described as “sons of oil” inasmuch as they are begotten of the Spirit Word (1Pet. 1:22-25), and that Spirit is symbolised by the oil: “Ye have an unction (*anointing oil*) from the Holy One” (1Jn. 2:20).

Laboring for the Oil of the Word

The olive tree provides many lessons for life in the Truth, and for encouragement along the way of salvation.

Husbandry must be maintained to obtain the **best and purest** olive oil to give the clearest light in lamps — as is also required to illuminate the mind. The olives were gently **beaten** in a mortar, then the oil was **strained** to remove impurities. Similarly, Yahweh gently beats, or chastises, His saints during their probation (Heb. 12:5) to purge their characters so that the clearest, brightest light might shine forth.

The pure oil is clear, producing a full-strength, white light, with little smoke. But when olives are carelessly crushed in a mill, the result is disappointing, and the light is defective. Our Lord reveals the example. He was carefully “beaten” by divine permission in the wilderness (Lk. 4:1) and in Gethsemane (sig., *The Oil Press*), but not crushed to his destruction.

The oil of the olive not only symbolises the Spirit (1Jn. 2:20), but also the Word of God: “Thy Word is a **lamp** (*oil*) unto my feet and a **light**

(*from the oil*) unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). It thus represents the Spirit Word of God.

The Olive Tree and the Ecclesia

As we sit enjoying our Bible class under this olive grove in the paradise garden of the future, we delight in the fragrance of millions of **white** flowers, clothing these trees. The trees are bending under the load of blossoms. They represent the righteous lives of saints, who “walk with the Lord Jesus *in white*” (Rev. 3:4). Like the delightful perfume of these trees, their lives are a “sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2).

Olive groves need no irrigation. If vineyards are left alone they die out very quickly; mulberry orchards fall rapidly to ruin without constant watering and care. But the olive looks to heaven for its water — as do the faithful followers of God (Jn. 4:14); they do not need the attention of human hands.

The olive continues to yield fruit even in old age. Though the tree might look as dry as a post, it continues to produce its crop of precious oil berries, even to twenty generations. So, too, the saints may produce “the fruit of the Spirit” into advanced years. And the tree produces abundantly; a large tree can produce seventy litres (15 UK or 18 US gallons) of olive oil in one season. Similarly, the Fruit of the spirit is expansive: it develops proficently.

The Season for Harvesting

Olives are harvested in the **seventh months**, at about the time of the Feast of Trumpets to the Feast of Tabernacles, which points to the kingdom age. The olive branches were used at the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15).

Notice that the tree is not tall like the majestic cedar. Similarly, during their probation, the saints are unas-

suming, not elevating themselves in pride and prestige. They are like their Master, who “made himself of no reputation” (Phil. 2:7). Yet the tree loves the sun — as do the saints who flourish under the “Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4:2).

The timber of the olive is **hard** and **durable**; it needs skilful craftsmanship to carve from it objects of beauty. Similarly the attributes and characteristics of the saints are firm and lasting (2Tim. 2:3; Josh. 1:9), and yet they are skilfully shaped by the hands of the Master tradesman (Jer. 18:6).

Highly Prized and Valuable

The olive tree is valued by its owner. It provides him with **food**, **medicine** and **light**. Pickled olives are relished; and almost every kind of dish can be cooked in olive oil. Even soap in ancient Israel was made from this tree. So, the cleansing process of the kingdom age comes from the spiritual olives: the immortal saints, who provide the spiritual nourishment, enlightenment and “healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2).

The olive tree gave sustenance for the poor. After the harvesting, notwithstanding much shaking and beating, there was always a gleaning left for the needy: “two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough” (Isa. 17:6). The Truth provides for every need; none is so poor that he cannot obtain some benefit.

Emblem of Peace

The olive was first mentioned at the conclusion of the devastating flood (Gen. 8:11), and ever since the dove returned to Noah with an olive leaf, it has been a symbol of **peace**. Captain Cook, the early explorer, found that olive branches carried in the hands were readily understood by South Sea Islanders as *emblems of peace* — illustrating man’s origins

from the family of Noah. How appropriate now in this millennial age of peace!

Grafting is Contrary to Nature

Paul declares that the grafting of the Gentile “branches” into the root of the Israel olive tree is contrary to nature (Rom. 11:24). In nature, only good branches can be grafted into wild stock — the reverse does not work! However, the exceptions are that **only in Israel** and **only occasionally**, wild shoots are grafted into a good, but tired root, and *both are invigorated eventually*.

In this Yahweh has worked a miracle, contrary to the nature of man. The mind of the Spirit, developed in those called out of every “kindred, nation and tongue” is contrary to the fallen sin-prone nature of man. And yet, this tree will only bear fruit in the right climate, just as the saints can only expect to flourish in the right ecclesial conditions and domestic environment, though circumstances may provide trials and tribulation.

The Mount of Olives

It is significant that the Lord Jesus Christ spent the last moments of his ministry on the Mount of Olives (Mat. 26:30) as he faced the final trial in his provision of the oil of sacrifice for the “sin of the world”.

He will return in glory to that very spot (Zech. 14:4), accompanied with the “sons of oil” then made immortal, altogether forming the lampstand of faith (ch. 4:14).

Thus this splendid tree, with so much association with the divine program of faith and salvation since the days of Noah (Gen. 8:11), will witness the greatest moment of history as Christ and the Saints stand triumphant on the Mount of Olives — the fulfillment of all that which the olive represents.

— Stan Snow

The Strong Oak Tree

Wandering mentally through the future Garden of Paradise in a company of the Redeemed, we see many different trees and shrubs, which provide lessons, exhortations and interesting comparisons along the walk of faith. Before us is a massive oak tree, its magnificent, powerful trunk and over-shadowing branches standing for strength, vigor and shade.

OAK TREES are living pillars—like the enormous columns standing erect in the House of Prayer for all Nations, in the city of Zion. Both “oak” and “pillar” come from the same basic Hebrew root word *'uwl*, meaning: *strength; to be firm, upright*; except that *elah* (oak) is the feminine gender, and *ayil*, (pillar) is the masculine form of the same word.

The word is related to the Hebrew *elah*, and its plural *elohim*: *mighty ones* — which is not surprising, since there are multitudes of immortal *Elohim*-Saints at the Temple, as there are multitudes of majestic pillars in that Most Holy Place (cp. Ezek. 40:14).

The Angel and the Oak Tree

The oak is mentioned more than fifteen times in the Old Testament, with significant associations.

Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, was buried under an oak at Bethel (Gen. 35:8). The angel of Yahweh sat under the oak in Ophrah, and spoke to Gideon concerning a sign of the presence of a “mighty one” (Jud. 6:11). The man of *Elohim* sat under an oak (*elah*) when he was addressed by the prophet of Bethel (*the House of El*) as recorded in 1Kgs. 13:14.

Hence it is fitting that this mighty tree should be found in the Paradise Garden, standing so strikingly majestic, and portraying by its aspect, name and historic associations, the immortal messengers of God. Its name has been often used to denote the **nobles** of society. Isaiah prophesies of the oaks of the nations being subjected to discipline by God’s power: “the day of Yahweh of hosts shall be upon every one that is *proud and lofty*... and upon all the *oaks* of Bashan” (ch. 2:12-13).

How appropriate that when Goliath defied Israel’s God, he did so at the *Valley of Elah* — the “Valley of the Oaks” (1Sam. 17:2). It became the *Valley of the Elohim*, for the Philistines were no match for the power of divine judgment manifested that day in the young warrior, David, as representative of the “*Elohim* of the armies of Israel” (v. 45).

The Sacrifice of Christ

The oak has a close connection with the principles of the Atonement. The word “ram” is the Hebrew *ayil*, the cognate word of *elah* (oak), as mentioned above. The ram stood before the flock, as the oak stands prominently amongst the trees. The ram is the leader of the flock, the

strong protector and guide of the sheep. It was a ram, "caught in a thicket" (Gen. 22:13) that symbolised the salvation offered to Abraham and Isaac: typical of the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such he has "gone before" his flock, leading all in the same direction of salvation through his atonement.

This principle is the "oak" or "pillar" of our faith, the basis upon which the whole purpose of Yahweh is revealed to mankind.

The ceiling of the Tabernacle was made of "rams' skins dyed red" (Exod. 25:5), representing the covering of the blood of Christ, who was the Passover Lamb: a *male* ram — the

"son of man whom Thou (God) madest *strong* for Thyself" (Psa. 80:17).

There are many wonderful lessons to be gained from the great oak, under which we have gathered for a few moments. As we leave this tree, we recall the *pillars of strength* in the House of Prayer for all nations, which stands majestically on the top of Zion's hill. They are everywhere present in the Temple, represented by the wondrous grove of oaks in the Garden. We remember the promise of the Master: "Him that overcometh will I make a *pillar in the Temple* of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12).
— *Stan Snow.*

PARABLES OF PARADISE

A STROLL THROUGH THE FUTURE MILLENNIAL GARDEN OF GOD — PART 8

The Desert Tree of Probation

*We have seen many interesting trees and bushes in this remarkable stroll through the millennial garden. Now, as we approach the end of our tour, we turn aside to a more remote area of the garden. There is a group of large, ugly, windswept desert trees here. They are the amazing **Shittah Trees**, providing important lessons for the generation of the millennium.*

OVER in the wilderness reserve of this Paradise garden (cp. Isa. 41:19) is a strange desert tree. Observe its miniscule pale green leaves, its black thorns, its tangle of branches, its absence of shade. Its wood is hard and unmanageable, very difficult to work.

It is the *Shittah* tree, a rather unattractive tree from which the wood for the tabernacle furnishings in the long-distant past was obtained.

Tree of the Wilderness Wandering

The ugly shittah tree was found in the desolate wilderness; its characteristics were appropriate to the purpose for which God designed it. Even when its unmanageable wood is worked into a vessel or implement of some kind, it is found to have holes and imperfections in it. It is a tree of the wilderness, just as natural Israel were “children of the wilderness”, “stiffnecked” and “unworkable” (Deut. 9:6).

As such the tree is a very apt symbol for fallen human nature. The Hebrew word *shittah* has the idea of “being scourged with thorns”, suggesting to the spiritual mind **the probationary state of mankind, or the flesh**. Even our beloved Master was found of the same substance as his brethren

(Heb. 2:14), being bruised and scourged in the day of his probation (Isa. 53). It is true of all saints that only “through much tribulation ye enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Thus the tree represents **saints on probation**.

Covered with the Gold of Faith

Why did Yahweh select such an ugly material to stand in His presence in the tabernacle? The answer is in Exod. 25:10-11, “And they shall make an ark of shittim wood... overlay it with pure gold, within and without”. It was only when the wood was covered with gold, that the vessel or furniture could stand in the divine presence. Similarly in the antitype, mortal man has no approach to God except he be clothed with the “gold of faith”, and this has to be “within and without” — i.e., the whole man, both mentally (within) and morally (without).

This covering of gold may possibly have been attached to the shittim wood ark by nails of gold, speaking of **faith and suffering**. The golden nails are mentioned in the construction of Solomon’s Temple: “and the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold” (2Chr. 3:9). As the antitypical ark, Christ came in Adamic nature, fitly represented by the shittim wood, suf-

fering tribulation and scourging (Mat. 27:26), thereby “he learned obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:7-8). Golden nails *hammered into* the wood speak of suffering in faith: “the *trial of your faith* being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire” (1Pet. 1:7).

Humbling the Flesh

The Bible history of these trees reveals a wonderful type of the history of Christ and his brethren.

Firstly, there was a *search* and *selection* of suitable trees to provide material for the tabernacle; this was done in the dry and thirsty desert. So Yahweh seeks and selects from the “wilderness of the people” a suitable tree that can constitute “a people for His Name” (Acts 15:14).

Next, the shittah trees were symbolically *humbled* by being cut down and levelled to the dust. Similarly, the saints have their hearts broken and their spirits bruised in the tribulations accompanying their probation: “Yahweh is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite (bruised) spirit” (Psa. 34:18).

The trees were cut and shaped to the divine specifications that they might be placed in the house of God. Saints must likewise be shaped by the experiences of life, to form part of the spiritual temple (1Cor. 3:16).

Finally, the cut and prepared boards were covered with gold and stood upright — just as the saints must be covered with faith and stand shoulder to shoulder in the Truth’s work, as Paul told the brethren: “the gospel which I preached... wherein *ye stand*” (1Cor. 15:1). Then they will become “the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man” (Heb. 8:2).

Sweet-Smelling and Indestructible

Like the godly man, the shittah tree is *capable* of manifesting good and pleasant things. It produces a delightful yellow-golden flower (like its related

acacias, the Australian Wattles). Its fragrant aroma speaks of the faith of the saints which is a pleasure to Yahweh (Heb. 11:6). Human nature can be changed to immortality, when treated and purified by the golden principles of faith. Indeed, man has been *promised* eternal life upon belief and faithful compliance with the Gospel (Mk. 16:16). The purified and cleansed shittim wood is indestructible to pests and insects: a symbol of immortality when our nature is purified and cleansed.

The Contest Within

When pierced, the shittah yields a medicinal gum arabic, a substance long used by pharmacists. Thus, the healing principles of sacrifice are taught.

When stripped of its bark, the shittim wood is orange in color. *Orange* is a combination of *red* and *gold* — thus in man there is both *sin nature* (red: sin-biased flesh, Rom. 8:3) and *faith* (gold: the manifestation of the Word in the mind, 1Pet. 1:7; Jn. 1:14). Being an amber color, orange speaks of this fiery battle against sin in a most striking way.

But, interestingly, the wood loses some of this fiery color as it darkens with age, suggesting a progress in the things of the Truth, and a victory, to some degree, over sin, as the believer’s life in the Truth progresses.

In the Millennial Garden

Now, in the joyous paradise, the shittah tree is a reminder of the *probation of the saints*, as the new generation comes to the Temple for worship. Yahweh has declared that He will plant “in the wilderness, the shittah tree” (Isa. 41:19). For what reason will He *plant* such trees in a wilderness where they already abound? “That they may see, and know, and consider... that the hand of Yahweh hath done this” (v. 20). Done what? Made glorious, immortal beings out of the imperfect, unyielding, difficult wood of the flesh! — *Stan Snow*.

The Joy of Restoration

We come to the end of our delightful stroll through the future millennial Garden of God. It has been a path of wonderful lessons, as we examined some of the varied trees and bushes that abound in this forest. There are many great and small trees, but now in our last article we move towards the bottom of the garden, to a bush with strikingly white flowers — a bush that speaks appropriately of the glorious Feast of Tabernacles: the great day of joy.

WHAT A PLEASURE to see the evergreen myrtle bush in the Garden of God, with its brilliantly white and fragrant flowers. It has upright branches and deep green leaves, the very antithesis to thorns and briars. Thorns and briars speak of *Israel in Rebellion* (Isa. 33:12), but the myrtle represents *Israel in Restoration*: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the *myrtle tree*: and it shall be to Yahweh for a name, for an everlasting sign” (Isa. 55:13).

Is it any wonder that the myrtle grows in this Paradise Garden in such profusion?

The Feast of Tabernacles

In Hebrew, “myrtle” is *hadass*, meaning to *spring, to leap*, so called because it springs forth, growing rapidly. The feminine form of the word is *Hadassah*, the proper Hebrew name for Esther (ch. 2:7). The myrtle signifies *restoration* (Neh. 8:15,17), and is an appropriate name for Esther because she was the means of Israel’s restoration in a time of great distress.

Myrtle branches were used at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15), speaking in type of this day of the Mil-

lennium, when Israel has become the *head* of the nations (Deut. 28:13; Isa. 60:14) in the fullness of *restoration*, and, like the myrtle, “springing forth” with “branches that run over the wall” (Gen. 49:22). Zechariah had such a vision, seeing “a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the *myrtle trees*” which formed a *booth* (tabernacle) of shade (Zech. 1:8). In this vision of the Paradise, to which the feast of Tabernacles pointed, the earth is at rest (v. 11), and the *Man Christ Jesus*, upon a red horse of war, has completed his march “to and fro through the earth” (v. 11) in conquest of the nations (Psa. 149:2,9).

A Time for Healing

Look again at these lovely white fragrant flowers. Enjoy the aromatic branches. See the *medicinal oil* secreting glands on the leaves. Does it not remind us of “the leaves of the tree which are for the *healing* of the nations” (Rev. 22:2)? Are not the nations *spiritually healed* in this glorious Age as they *spring forth* to worship Yahweh in the Temple?

In contrast to the sparse shittah tree (see p. 331), the myrtle provides deep shade by its dense branches. Israel is

similarly able to care for the nations as they shelter beneath her wisdom (Isa. 60:3).

Consider the *five lobed flowers* of this graceful plant. Here is the *grace* of Yahweh, in restoring Israel.

Parable of the Seven Trees

The proliferation of myrtles in the Kingdom, with the diminution of thorns, literal and figurative, is a fulfillment of all that the prophets have spoken: "I will plant in the wilderness the *cedar* (*immortality*), the *shittah* tree (*multitudes of saints on probation*), and the *myrtle* (*Israel in restoration*), and the *oil* tree (*Olive: sons of oil from Jew and Gentile*); I will set in the desert the *fir* tree, and the *pine*, and the *box* together (*trees of the mountains shall grow even in the Arabah*)" (Isa. 41:19).

Here are seven evergreens, speaking of *Israel after the Spirit*, flourishing in the Seventh Millennial day. They

grow in the Paradise Garden at a time of which the prophet spoke: "It shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles" (Zech. 14:16).

In Conclusion

As we have strolled together through this paradise garden, on this delightful summer day in the kingdom, our minds have seen the fullness and beauty of the Psalmist's declaration, concerning the destiny of the children of Yahweh:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1:3).

— Stan Snow.

Lift Up Your Heads

As the Lord Jesus looked down from the Mount of Olives upon the city of Jerusalem doomed to soon feel the destruction of judgment, he looked beyond those times to the stretch of Gentile oppression — and spoke to his disciples of the signs that portend his second coming. Those signs abound today, and are cause for the rejoicing of the Saints (Luke 21).

ooOoo

A TIME we are told in the Scriptures is to come, as never before, on earth, with distress of nations, as sea and waves angrily roar.

A TIME when hearts will be failing for fear of things coming on men; then shall there be great tribulation, the judgment of this dark world's sin.

A TIME where great signs in the heavens, sun, moon and stars portend be; when nation shall rise against nation in warfare and fierce enmity.

A TIME of much pleasure-seeking, overcharged with cares of this life unawares, the world heads for destruction, its last and most terrible strife.

AS SOON AS this begins to happen, look up for God's promise on high, lift up your heads with rejoicing, for redemption is now drawing nigh.

— S.P.