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“The Fig Tree, and all The Trees.”

“And he spake to them a parable ; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” —Luke 21 :29-31. (Read Luke 21:5-33.)

SPECIAL interest to Christians today is centered in this parable of our Master’s. We find that our Lord, after describing in a general way the events covering the whole of this Gospel Age—nation rising against nation and so on—gave His disciples this parable so that they would record it for the particular benefit of similar disciples when it was due to have fulfilment.

It is well to remember that a parable means, as the dictionary explains it—“A comparison ; a similitude; specifically, a short fictitious narrative or story of something, by means of which a moral or teaching is drawn; as the parables of Christ.” This parable about the fig tree, and all the trees, is descriptive of springtime. In a matter of a few weeks, the whole aspect of the trees changes. When you see the buds and leaves spreading forth, you know that summer is nigh. That is the picture, and we want to find out the meaning of that picture. When Jesus said—“Likewise ye”—He could not have referred to those very disciples before Him, but rather, they represented the Lord’s disciples who would benefit from this parable at the time of its fulfilment; and we note the time of its fulfilment would be just prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, or in the words of Jesus—“know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” Springtime points forward to summer-time, — the summer-time of God’s favor,—just as the wintertime represents the wilderness condition through which mankind has been passing throughout Many centuries.

That our Lord did not leave His disciples of His first advent in doubt about the long period intervening before the Kingdom of God would come, is evident by another parable He gave in Luke 19:11-13. “They thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear,” so He gave them the parable of the Pounds, instructing them to “Occupy till I come.” In other words, our Lord meant—Be my representatives, take the Truth forth throughout the length and breadth of the world, as generation after generation of disciples would succeed each other, until the Second Advent, when the time would come to deal with His servants. That parable shows us that the Kingdom was a long way off when it was spoken by our Lord.

So many times our Lord taught by stories and illustrations, truths concerning realities. What does this parable of the fig tree really mean? We believe the first part of this parable is well revealed in another parable in Luke 13:6-9. “He spake also this parable : a certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard,

Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none ; cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well ; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

It does not take much study for us to understand that this parable of the fig tree was referring to the Jewish nation, to whom our Lord came and presented Himself as their Messiah. For three years He came looking for fruit, and in the parable it says, What is the use of it; cut it down. But No, says the dresser, Let it remain another year ; if it does not produce fruit, cut it down then. Our Lord was 31 years during His ministry expecting some fruitage from Israel. They were chosen by God hundreds of years previously; the succeeding generations should have been appreciating the words of the Lord, and this generation should have been ready to receive their Messiah. John the Baptist called them to repentance, and told them this wonderful One was coming; but so few were able to appreciate the Son of God, their own Messiah. This parable undoubtedly depicts the Jewish nation. As a nation there was so little fruitage manifest. Even after well into the fourth year there was not the fruitage the Lord expected at that time.

Following through the records of our Lord’s first advent we find in Luke 19:28-44 a helpful account of Jesus’ entry into the city of Jerusalem as a king, and His statement respecting this Jewish nation which should have accepted Him as their Messiah and Deliverer. Our Lord had a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as the common people hailed Him as their King, but Jesus knew that the religious rulers were going to stir up strife against Him. He was coming in to go through most terrifying experiences, and shortly would be crucified. That is why He wept over Jerusalem. They should have rejoiced and said, Here is our Saviour, our Messiah. But instead, He said to them (verse 42), “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least *in* this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” If only they had been in a true heart condition —if they had not been misled by the Scribes and Pharisees! But Jesus had to declare —”Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” What a pathetic situation for our Lord on that occasion ; truly, “He came unto his own, and His own received him not.”

Shortly after the events of verses 45-48 in the 19th chapter of Luke, we have a most revealing incident recorded in Matt. 21:17-20. It seems that the Lord, after riding into Jerusalem, had gone out to Bethany overnight, and returned next day into the city. “Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the *fig* tree withered away.”

Here we see Jesus again picturing to His disciples that this fig tree represented the Jewish nation. There was no fruit on the *fig* tree, so He cursed it. The disciples noticed how soon the *fig* tree withered away. We cannot mistake these signs that Jesus *gave*. He pointed out that that generation was not worthy of the blessings they could have received from His wonderful teachings at that time. There is no doubt that here is another picture of the withering condition of the Jewish nation, because of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah and King. The “withering away” of the Jewish nation was revealed further in Matthew’s Gospel, with the declaration of Jesus—”Your house is left unto you desolate,” (See Matt. 23:34-39; also Paul’s record in 1 Thes. 2:14-16.)

Does this mean that the Lord had cast off the Jewish nation for all time, when He said —”Your house is left unto you desolate”? Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, and Israel scattered throughout all nations. Does it mean they were cast off forever? The Apostle Paul answers our question in Rom. 11:1,2.—”I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid . . . God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.” It is a mistake, then, to conclude that Israel was cast off forever because they did not accept the High Calling. God’s call went to the Gentiles •to make up the required number for the heavenly calling, which Paul explains—”What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for ; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” A comparatively few amongst Israel grasped the

privilege of the heavenly invitation by accepting Jesus as their Saviour, and the rest were blinded. The Apostle Paul continued—"Have they stumbled that they should fall"?—without any further hope—"God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." And further, Paul declared—"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles ; how much more their fulness? ... For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Not only life from the dead for Israel, but life from the dead for all nations. Here we see the two phases of the Kingdom revealed. If the casting away of the Jews from the High Calling be the reconciling of some from the Gentiles for the Bride of Christ, what shall the receiving of the Jews back into favor with God mean, but something on a still wider scale—life from the dead! (See Rom. 11:7-15.)

After describing the necessity for humility in thankfulness on the part of the Gentiles received into the Lord's spiritual family (Rom. 11:16-24), we come to Paul's wonderful explanation in verse 25—"I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." "Blindness in part,"—Israel is not fully blind. They still hold to the Old Testament promises of God. The Messiah cursed the fig tree, and said,—"Your house is left unto you desolate." They are blind "in part" only, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in—until the required number from the Gentile nations is called out for the Bride of Christ.

Another of our Lord's parables explains the blindness of Israel, especially the religious leaders, in the words of Matt. 21:33-46.—"The kingdom of God (the opportunity of becoming members in that kingdom) shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." It may be asked, What nation is this, that is going to bring forth the required fruits? Is it the British nation, the French nation, or any other of the nations on earth down through the centuries? No; not one nation conforms to the requirements. But there have been some of mankind, here and there in all nations, who could qualify. The Apostle Peter tells us about this wonderful nation to whom God is going to give the kingdom which was taken away from Israel, in 1 Pet. 2:7-10. "Unto you therefore that believe he is precious Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light ; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained, mercy."

So, the members have been taken from here and there from different countries, kindreds and tongues. Some from Britain, from America, China, Russia, Africa, Australia, etc., making up this "nation," all down the Gospel Age. In all, it is but a "little flock," for few have appreciated the privilege of walking in the footsteps of Christ. The fact that blindness is still upon Israel is a proof that the fulness of the Gentiles has not yet come in—the calling to the heavenly kingdom is still operative to those whom the Lord our God shall call.

The Apostle Paul explains, however, that when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, then—"All Israel shall be saved ; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Rom. 11:26,27.) In view of this clear statement from the Apostle, who would claim that Israel has no part in the promises of God? Who would be foolish enough to claim that all the promises to Israel belong to their own earthly organisation of people? It may surprise some people to know that there is an organisation today which claims all the promises of Israel for themselves. It is a most amazing thing. They say, We, and we only, are God's chosen people; this shows how some who previously had much of the truth can be deceived.

And what about the covenant God is *going* to make with Israel? Looking at Heb. 8:8-12, we see how the

apostle explains this from the prophet Jeremiah. We see what kind of people with whom this covenant is made—not with the Israelitish fathers, who, when they left Egypt came through the Red Sea and the Lord gave them the Law Covenant. No, but these *are* the same kind of people with whom the Lord is to make the New Covenant. They are not Christians of the Gospel Age. This new' Covenant has to do with Israel, natural people, on the earth, after the Bride has been completed; the New Covenant does not operate until “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” as we have seen from the Apostle in this 11th chapter of Romans. (See also Rom. 11:28-32.)

In Luke 21:30, we read—”When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.” Did Israel shoot forth? We all know the answer, for the greatest re-establishment in the history of the human family has taken place in Israel. First think of the conditions existing about the period 1914-1918. Palestine was a desert country; but a miracle occurred. The Turks were driven out ; ever since, progress has been made step by step, until Israel became a State in 1948. They became an established nation. Could there be a more appropriate term used than that given by our Lord in His words about the *fig* tree putting forth leaves?

It is wonderful to see how Israel has reacted according to what the prophets foretold. Looking at Jeremiah 16, from verse 14 we read—”Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them ; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” So there was the fishing; that is, the enticements, and also the hunting. Six million Jews were persecuted to death under Hitler’s regime. Why did God permit that? Those Jews are going to come up in the resurrection; they will remember what happened. They are going back to Israel, too, in the resurrection ; they will inhabit the land, and say, We were not worthy in our previous life. We did not acknowledge our Messiah. But they will be recompensed, along with all mankind, when they respond to the Lord in their time of favorable opportunity. (See also Amos 9:8-13.)

Now, what about the Lord’s further reference in His parable to “all the trees”? If the fig tree represents Israel, do “all the trees” represent the nations generally? That would seem to be correct. What is happening to all the nations of earth today? Has there ever been such an awakening or “shooting forth”, a coming to life amongst the nations as we have seen in the last quarter of a century, or the last ten years— or even the last twelve months? One Scripture seems to have special reference to this awakening; that is 1 Thes. 4:16, relating to the “days of the Son of Man.”—”For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” What has that got to do with the nations at large? The word “shout” comes from a Greek word meaning a shout of encouragement, or incitement. That has been *going* on amongst the world of mankind for a number of years now. There has been a stirring up to what they claim are their rights. The dark-skinned people are saying, We will no longer be the servants of white men. The time has come for the darker races to come into their own rights; both true and fancied rights are being shouted all over the world.

The following newspaper report of September 30th last, is to the point: — “Nigeria emerges tonight as Africa’s numerically largest independent State in the biggest transfer of power by Britain since she granted independence to the 400 million people of the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

“The 36 million people of Nigeria, on the west coast of Africa, comprise nearly one-sixth of the population of the entire African continent. Nigeria’s population is considerably greater than the combined populations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and is increasing by about one million every year. Until the middle of last century, Nigeria was known mainly as a major source of slaves for West Indian

and American plantations.

“With the granting of full independence to Nigeria, fewer than 40 million people remain under British colonial control—mostly in Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean (Malta) and the Caribbean. Thus, the British Empire has shrunk from a total of nearly 500’ million people at the end of the second world war. And the pull-out process in Africa— which the British Prime Minister (Mr. Macmillan) has described as ‘the wind of change’—continues.”

The British are wise in wishing to pass over independence to these people peacefully. The poor people of the Congo have not been so fortunate ; they thought that gaining their liberty would be everything, but there are too many who want to be Prime Minister in that land, and they have not obtained the happiness they sought. But the point is that God’s time has come for all the nations of the world, “all the trees”, to become aware of their rights, and in their selfishness they are going to precipitate a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. From Nahum 2:3, we read—”In the day of his preparation (preparing for Christ’s Kingdom) the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.” Yes, but after that, all mankind will be ready to listen to the Lord,—”Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psa. 46:8-10.)

Looking at Rev. 7:1-3, we have a picture telling us that God is holding back the winds so they shall not hurt, amongst other things, “the trees.” This is the day that God has planned. He is holding back ‘the onslaught of trouble until a very special time,—”till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” God’s plan runs to a timetable. These angels are given the authority to let loose the winds of trouble when the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. Then the whirlwind will be allowed to blow. There is to be a great levelling process so that all humanity will be thoroughly humbled, and then they will cry to the Lord, and be ready to receive His blessings.

“The desire of all nations shall come.” None will be disappointed; all shall be fully satisfied. There will be no United Nations in the sense in which we have it today; but the great Administrators on the earth will be Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Ancient Worthies. The power of Christ and His saints will come down from on high, and nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all the Lord’s holy kingdom. (See Ezek. 17:22-24; Isa. 55:8-13; Isa. 25:6-9; Isa 52:9,10.)

These prophecies tell us about the great reconstruction time with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth.

In Luke 21:12-15 we have a message especially for Christians. While these words were addressed particularly to the disciples of Christ who faced the persecutions which followed His death and resurrection, the same principle applies to God’s people in this end of the Gospel Age. Some Christians may be called upon to go through some of the trouble coming upon the world. “Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate for a testimony: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist,” —do not be anxious. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” Be confident of Him. “Stand still, and see the salvation of our God.” Do not be mixed up with the struggles of this present evil world. Keep your hearts true and devoted to the Lord. The Lord’s people have a wonderful over-ruling providence working on their behalf. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” We must be true Christians. We must be fully yielded to the Lord to be worthy of God’s keeping and blessing. We can do this, by His grace. May it be so with us in all the days ahead!

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Pleasing the Lord.

ONE of our brethren has written recently concerning the verses of Scripture in. 1 Cor. 11:14-16, as follows:— “I have always felt somewhat mystified regarding the matter of men and the mention that it was proper that their hair should be short, yet in all the pictures of Christ that we have, and more or less of men generally in that day, we find them pictured with hair to the shoulders.”

Possibly other friends have wondered about this matter also. While we cannot be sure that the pictures of Christ are absolutely true representations of Him, when, He walked this earth, it is quite evident that to keep men’s hair of *a* length approaching the shoulders it would be necessary to cut it two or three times a year, from boyhood. It would seem, then, that hair cut from time to time would be considered short by the Apostle Paul in his explanation to the Corinthian Church. On the other hand, hair allowed to grow its full length, without cutting, would fit the Apostle’s description of long hair, which he stated—”is a woman’s glory; for her hair is given her for a covering.”

A lovely incident during our Lord’s ministry is revealed in Luke 7:37,38. “A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an ‘alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.” Here we see that the woman’s hair, full length, would be like a towel, and the lesson drawn from this incident is that of humble repentance and adoration of the Saviour in the use of that which was the woman’s “glory” being brought into service in this spontaneous manifestation of love for the Lord.

The Apostle’s statement in. 1 Cor. 11 is intended no doubt as a picture, to teach that the sisters represent the church, and the brethren represent the Lord in the assemblies.

How often is the statement made with reference to the Lord’s disciples, that they are *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Our Lord stated repeatedly—”They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14-16.)

Could it be that the sisters by refraining from cutting their hair, contrary to worldly custom, would be more pleasing to the Lord and a better witness for Him, by showing they appreciate the honor of representing His true Church during its earthly sojourn ? Yes, that is so.

The fact that the great Apostle Paul, concerned as he was with the deep things of God, took the opportunity to mention what may seem a rather small matter to some people, shows that the significance is not at all small. The words of Jesus are also applicable—”He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” (Luke 16:10.) The apostle shows however, that this lovely picture of the sisters’ long hair is not a command to be followed—”If any seem to be contentious (dispute his advice, desiring their own will in the matter) we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” No, such advice is for those who love to accept it for the Lord’s sake.

Booklet for January’s “Peoples Paper.”

A helpful article in booklet form, entitled “Knowing God,” is taking the place of the “Peoples Paper” for January, 1961, and is being posted out to all subscribers with this issue of “Peoples Paper.” It is not possible always to supply all friends on the free list with booklets, but those desiring copies of this particular booklet are invited to apply for same.

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The brethren of the Melbourne Class wish to announce that their Annual Convention will be held this year (D.V.) on December 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond, and all friends able to attend these gatherings are cordially invited to make their arrangement accordingly. Further information from the Class Secretary—Mr. J. B. Hiam, 16 Kennedy Street, South Oakleigh, S.E.13, Victoria.

Some one has well said—”The Christian in the world is like a ship in the ocean. The ship is safe in the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship.” One of the great difficulties with Christianity today is that it has admitted the strangers, the “people of the land,” and recognized them as Christians. It does injury, not only to the Christians, by lowering their standards (for the average will be considered the standard), but it also injures the “strangers,” by causing many of them to believe themselves thoroughly safe and needing no conversion, because they are outwardly respectable, and perhaps frequently attendants at public worship.

God’s Best Gift.

WE are approaching another anniversary of the season of the year kept generally to celebrate the birth of Jesus as the babe of Bethlehem, and while it has often been stated that our Lord did not ask that his birth be especially remembered, though He did particularly request that His death be commemorated, yet there is something very inspiring in the record given by Luke respecting the birth in the city of David of our Saviour, Christ the Lord.

That our Heavenly Father could have sent Jesus into the world as a fully grown man, had this been His will, cannot be doubted, so there must have been some very good reason why an earthly mother was selected, and Jesus was born as a babe. Perhaps it was helpful for Jesus to become acquainted with members of the fallen human family over a period of thirty years, prior to entering upon His life of sacrifice. As a perfect child He must have felt the difference between other children and Himself, even as the -scoffs and scourgings that He received from sinful men, in later years, would inflict great anguish upon His heart and mind—in subdued sympathy for their waywardness. From this standpoint our Lord could well appreciate the sentiment of Paul’s statement long before it was formulated in the Apostle’s mind—”God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom.5:8.)

The fact that an angel of God proclaimed the birth of Jesus to a group of shepherds “watching over their flock by night,” is also of great interest to us. They were lowly, good-hearted men, no doubt, and while they were afraid of the heavenly visitor at the outset, the message proclaimed would no doubt calm their fears, and give them confidence and assurance that this event in Bethlehem was of the greatest importance since the creation and fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

To be told that they should “Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” was enough to thrill their hearts, even though the full understanding of it would be so imperfectly grasped. Would that people today would meditate more upon this lovely message from the heavenly servant to those shepherds, for even a partial appreciation of these “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” has a marked effect upon the minds and hearts of people generally, even though, from the worldly outlook today, there is so little to give hope and joy for the future.

For Christians, however, this angelic message is the basis for all future hopes and aims, for having accepted Christ the Lord as their Saviour, and having responded to the call to gladly walk in His steps of

sacrifice, these “good tidings of great joy” are a continual inspiration to strive for a closer walk with the exalted Saviour, while at the same time seeking to find others to whom this joyful message has appeal. And then to know that the further message of the heavenly host “praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men” is soon to be fulfilled amongst all the inhabitants of the earth who have ever lived, in the grand resurrection day of Christ’s Kingdom, truly exhibits God’s great love for all His human family, in His provision of His Best Gift of Jesus, so long ago, as the babe of Bethlehem.

Things The Lord Hates.

(Prov. 6:16-19.)

(Contributed Address.)

IN a general way we acknowledge that the Lord hates evil, but what really constitutes evil? We are apt to think of evil men as those who rob banks, commit murder and who live licentious lives. We think, Of course the Lord hates that, and we feel self-satisfied that we hate that kind of thing too.

However, the Lord’s hatred of evil is more intense and far-reaching. In Proverbs 8:13 we read that the fear (reverence) of the Lord is shown by our hatred of evil, but we see that the verse goes on to especially mention pride, arrogance and evil speaking as things that the Lord hates. More clearly still is the position explained in Prov. 6:16-19. (Please read.)

We have to an extent learned of God’s character, and to love the things that He loves —righteousness, truth, equity, etc. But not only must we love the things that the Lord loves, but we must hate the things that He hates. Let us see if we hate them as we should.

First, the Lord hateth a proud look —”Haughty eyes” is the literal rendering of the Hebrew. It refers largely to self-exaltation. In the Bible we have two outstanding contrasting examples; one in the spirit world and one amongst men. We have Lucifer, the archangel, son of the morning, and our Lord Jesus in the beginning as the Logos. One self-exalted himself and with haughty eyes said— “I will be like the Most High.” The other never meditated any usurpation to be like God, but was ready to humble Himself in assisting to work out God’s designs. The contrasts amongst men are found in the self-righteous Pharisee and the poor publican. One, with a proud look, thanked God that he had not fallen as low as other men; the other, conscious of his guilt, cried, “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.”

We should not fail to rightly rejoice in the position we enjoy in Christ Jesus, for verily He has placed our feet upon a rock and given us a solid foundation. He has lifted us out of the miry clay upon which our fellow men are still treading vainly in an effort to maintain a standing. We do have something over which to rejoice, but nothing about which to be proud. As we observe the lower standards of the groaning creation around us, our reflection ought to be — But for the grace of God, there go I. Such a spirit enhances appreciation of what the Lord has done for us, and makes us sympathetic and desirous to lift others up to our own position, if they will. (Gal. 6:10.)

Next, the Lord hates a lying tongue. If we analyze this correctly, we fear most of us will take a rap. A lying tongue is not only that which speaks deliberate falsehood for any reason, but would include the loose speaking to which we seem to fall a prey at times. In the company of others the flesh seems especially prone to err along this line. How often we may have to reflect — Was what I said today, before so and so, strictly correct, or did I romance somewhat; we have felt bad when we realised that it was not ; therefore, it was a lying tongue. Not for nothing does the apostle warn that the tongue “is a word of iniquity . . . that sets on fire the cycle of nature . . . and that it is set on fire of gehenna.” (James 3:6.)

Tongues unchecked stir up deadly strife and can eventually lead us to second death.

When men of mature years and good character are particularly observed as speaking with a strict guard upon their lips, it is a sign that they have profited by experience and learned of the remorse that follows a lying tongue. The writer of Ecclesiastes must have written from experience and observation when he said, "A fool's voice is known by a multitude of words . . . therefore be not rash with thy mouth . . . but let thy words be few." (Eccles. 5:3, 2.)

Next, the Lord hates hands that shed innocent blood. It has been helpfully pointed out that this is a symbol of murder, and murder in its refined form is assassination of character. Defaming others, or belittling them in any way, is tantamount to shedding innocent blood, and must bring retributive justice upon our own heads in due time, for it is one of the things the

Lord hates. Jealousy often plays a part in this sin; we run people down because we are jealous of them. Jealousy has often led to literal murder, and more often has it led to its symbolic refined form — assassination of character. Let us beware.

Further, the Lord hates the heart that deviseth wicked imaginations. We are assured that the Lord hates those who deliberately devise evil things, but more than that may be implied here. In reading 2 Cor. 10:5 we observe that the margin renders the word "imaginations" as "reasonings," and most translations so render it. The Douay translation is interesting — "We cast down reasonings and every high place that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and we lead captive every intent of the mind till we bring it where Christ is obeyed."

From the concordance it is noted with great interest that the word rendered "deviseth" in our text in Proverbs is far more often rendered "hold peace," "conceal," "keep silence" and similar. A seemingly permissible translation could be, "The Lord hates the heart that conceals (keeps silence concerning) wicked reasonings." Many things traditionally believed, the light of present truth has revealed to be but "imaginations" — beliefs or reasonings not supported by the

Scripture. The Trinity, Immortality of the Soul, and Eternal Torture in hell-fire are notable ones, and there are others. Do we use the "sword of the spirit" (which is the Word of God) to combat these high-sounding arguments which are not supported by the Scripture; or do we, for fear of mortal man, hold our tongues, keep silence and help conceal the fact that these are Satanic reasonings?

Jeremiah 8:14 is an interesting verse. The context has to do with a prophecy of judgment coming upon God's people because of backsliding and apostasy. Maybe it had a minor fulfilment in Jeremiah's day or soon after, but we think we see in this, much that pertains to the judgment that comes upon Babylon, God's professing church in the end of this age. It is virtually the stand the majority take as they discern the impending and coming judgments. While seeking protection in the fortresses of the church-state powers, God puts them to silence and compels them to drink the cup of their own mixing. We find numbers today who reveal that they know that many long-accepted doctrines are false. They show sympathy and even encourage us to continue the good fight in defence of truth, yet they will not personally identify themselves with the truth or its messengers. However, those who hear and OBEY God's call to "Come out of her, My people," (Rev. 18:4), will not conceal the wicked reasonings that have covered the earth with gross darkness for so long, but will continue to let the light shine for the blessing and assistance of others who "hate the things the Lord hates."

A verse by J. Russell Lowell is appropriate

“They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak.
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think.
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.”

Next, the Lord hates feet that be swift in running to mischief. The word “mischief” is really “evil” and is so translated an overwhelming number of times. While all these abominations mentioned are hated by the Lord in a general way, we would understand them to have special reference to those who practise these things while professing to know God. The Lord hates the spirit that rushes into things without seeking His counsel. Our course may seem to be correct on the surface, yet lead us into evil. Twice does the writer of Proverbs warn us “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, yet the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25.) Also please note Prov. 12:15. The Lord is pleased to have us wait upon Him and seek His guidance, instead of running into ways that are contrary to His will. It is not good to be wise in our own conceits, but to remember that the fleshly heart is desperately wicked and we continually need the Lord’s spirit to guide us.

Again, the Lord hates a false witness that speaketh lies. We are reminded of one of the commandments given to God’s ancient people, the spirit of which surely is still to be practised by His people now,—”Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Much tittle tattle engaged in is often false witness against our neighbor, if only we realised it. Evidence we have against persons is quite often hearsay only, to which a little is added each time it is repeated. How unbecoming that God’s people should indulge in such. Another aspect of false witness, speaking lies, is found in Jeremiah 23:31,32. Also read verses 21,22 in the same chapter. So we want to take special care that we prophesy truth, do we not? We would not like to find the Lord against us for declaring falsehood in His name.

The seventh and last thing that the Lord hates is he that soweth discord amongst brethren. In how many ways can we do this? It is essential at all times to remember that none of us is perfect in the flesh. We often fail to do what we should, and we say the things which we ought not. We can often and easily make excuses for our own indiscretions, while we regard those of others unforgivingly. If we believe we have been wronged, or we consider another is taking an erring way, instead of following Scriptural injunctions in seeking to right matters in the spirit of the Lord, what do we sometimes do? We start a whispering campaign that tends to spread the discord and separates and hinders the fellowship of God’s people.

Surely it is good to reflect upon the things that the Lord hates and endeavor, with His help, to keep ourselves freer of them. By so doing, we will keep ourselves in the love of God, and we will hold richer fellowship with each other.

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