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This month, we present chapters three and four of THE BIBLE FOR EVERYMAN by Rosalie Maas.

Enjoy!

CHAPTER THREE

NOAH

NOAH is a delightfully fantastic fairy-tale figure to most people— a venerable patriarch with a large zoo on his treble-decker houseboat. Most people are familiar from their childhood days with the story of Noah in some form, but they do not take it seriously as something which could apply to us to-day. Yet upon investigation the story proves to be a most exact symbolic account of how to save ourselves, and everything which is worth saving, from the self-destructive processes of the material,—how to steer constantly clear of the wreckage of materialism. It gives a wonderfully wise and detailed picture of the orderly steps we can take in order to find our way out of "deep waters, where the floods overflow" us. So we cannot be too grateful for its place in the Bible, and whenever gratitude enters into our Bible studies they are much enriched.

To take the story literally involves a great strain upon credulity, and robs the story of its present and universal significance. The record may well have been based on some actual happening, but it is a well-known myth

embodied in several primitive cultures. Symbols derived from the story of Noah are used all through the Scriptures, and to the student of the Bible it is clear that when the Psalmist, for instance, says, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea," he is thinking primarily of a great spiritual fact and not of a physical deluge. The Bible is profoundly consistent in its symbolism.

The name "Noah" means "comfort," and when we find ourselves overwhelmed with trouble, an understanding of what Noah illustrates offers us the comfort, not of emotional sympathy, but of an intelligent, constructive method of putting things right from the highest standpoint. Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn [who are unhappy at being deprived of that which they still hold dear]: for they shall be comforted [blessed with a sense of substantial and abiding good]."

The Thousand-Year Periods of Bible History

The record of Noah and the flood occupies the greater part of the second thousand-year period of Bible history. That is according to the reckoning made in the seventeenth century by Archbishop Ussher, who by putting in order all the years and ages given in the Hebrew text arrived at a chronology. The Bible begins with the story of the seven days of creation, which symbolizes the way in which thought works its way up by logical stages to a realization of the perfection of God's universe. Then the theme of each day of creation is developed and expanded in the corresponding thousand-year period of Bible history—"one day is with the Lord as a

thousand years." That is what gives the Bible its basic structure, its marvellous unity, its definite progression; that is what enables us to study it intelligently and without being overwhelmed by its vastness. Each day of creation is like a bud, with all the characteristics of its species latent but undeveloped; gradually it comes to full flower through its respective thousand-year period, and through its illustration in every part of the Bible. Each period is of course rich in detail drawn from symbols of all the days of creation, but it has one great and unmistakable spiritual hue.

The following gives a bird's-eye view of the thousand-year periods of Bible history and how they illustrate their respective days of creation:—

DAY OF CREATION

1st. Light—intelligent thinking.

2nd. Firmament between the waters above and beneath—purity.

3rd. Dry land appearing and bringing forth—definiteness and identity.

4th. Sun, moon, and stars to give light on the earth—one all-embracing divine system.

5th. Birds and fishes—inspiration and multiplication.

THOUSAND-YEAR PERIOD

Creation stories.

Noah saved from the universal deluge by his ark.

The focus shifts to semi-historical figures (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses) and to the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

History of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel and of their captivity and return. Learning by painful experience that disobedience to fundamental Principle brings punishment; also learning through the basic teaching of the prophets how to understand that Principle.

Jesus' mission ("I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"), and the beginnings of Christianity, with abundant healing.

Bible history ends after five thousand-year periods, although its prophetic range extends far beyond them to embrace all periods. We ourselves are now nearing the end of the sixth thousand-year period since the beginning of Bible history, and our scientific age corresponds to the sixth day of creation (in which man was given dominion). That reckoning, however, is only from one limited point of view, because when Jesus came he showed that the days of creation are so much more than the basis of Bible history;

he lived the truth of each one of them, thereby proving that they represent ever-present values, eternally available and practical to those who understand them with the head and with the heart, and who live by their standard.

The first thousand-year period of Bible history consists of the creation period, and is represented by the true and false accounts of creation, which we have already briefly considered. The light of the first day of creation not only illumines the truth of creation, but also exposes the baseless error of a false conception of creation. Now the second day, in which the firmament is introduced, is given dramatic illustration in the story of Noah. The symbol of the firmament means so much more to us immediately it is shown as it appears in operation, saving Noah from the flood. That firmament, erected between the waters above and beneath, symbolizes firm separation from all which is not Godlike and which is therefore fundamentally unreal; through erecting just such a firmament by means of his ark, Noah was able to find refuge from the destructiveness of the flood.

The Sons of God Wed the Daughters of Men and Beget Giants

The sixth chapter of Genesis opens by saying that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." That is a clear symbol of choosing to divide our affections between two opposites.

The "son of God" in each one of us is all that is faithful to enduring good. To be more explicit: the son of God in us has a sense of the light of the first day of creation, and therefore is wise—he appeals to the source of all

wisdom and lets this direct his steps; he has a sense of the second day with its firmament—he can discern between the eternally real and mere temporary belief, and stand by the first; he has a sense of the dry land of the third day—he has a definite understanding of the reality he discerns, and feels that understanding growing up within himself to become his own, and inevitably bringing forth fruit; he has a sense of the sun, moon, and stars of the fourth day—he knows something of that which holds every definite detail within its system, and which operates with power when understood; he has a sense of the fifth day with its birds and fishes—he has a real love of spiritual things, which constantly lifts up his thought afresh to them, so that he feels here and now the abundant blessedness of being; he has a sense of the man of the sixth day, made in God's image, and so he is in command of every situation, because he can exercise dominion over the animal element in the world he beholds; and he has a sense of the fulfillment and rest of the seventh day—he feels that he is wedded indissolubly to the perfection of all things.

When we think that the "daughters of men" are fair, we feel the attraction of things below the standard of the son of God in us, and we choose to wed ourselves to them,—to make them our intimate companions in thought, to trust them and support them. If we do not gain a strong and pure sense of the sole reliability and reality of spiritual things, we are mesmerized by what seems superficially desirable, or the easiest course to adopt, but which is a fool's paradise, a reed "shaken with the wind,"— a merely material sense of health, wealth, and happiness. If we look for happiness in earthly things, we are looking for it in things which are perishable and liable to any accident. That is why Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,

where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Happiness is a spiritual possession, and one to which everyone is entitled. If we have an enduring idea of what happiness is,—the blessing of our true status as the beloved son of God, as the developing expression of impartial and universal good,— then we can never be even bruised by the inevitable disappointments of earthly hopes, and our tenure of happiness will be a lasting and ever-expanding one. Leaning on the material for happiness is a poor shift which we try repeatedly until we learn our foolishness by being brought up sharp by its ruthless treachery.

The story goes on to say that giants were born to the sons of God whenever they had intercourse with the daughters of men. So the mistake of our apparently harmless marriage is magnified until it issues in a Goliath,—an evil of abnormal proportions, which appears beyond our control. For instance, humanity has largely wedded itself to physical science, and the outcome is the H-bomb.

"And God [the highest concept of good, which exposes its opposite] saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... the earth was filled with violence ... all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." We begin to be appalled at the chaos, rottenness, perversion, or cruelty which has developed.

Peter's denial of Jesus when the latter was arrested and brought before the high priest is a good instance of how the son of God in us defiles himself by being attracted by a "daughter of men" to such an extent that he temporarily allies his thought to hers. Like us, who so often fail to stand by the highest we know when it seems engulfed by overwhelmingly adverse tides of general mortal opinion. Peter did not have the courage to let himself be associated in people's minds with Jesus,—with him who constantly proved that he was the son of God. When questioned on two occasions by a woman, Peter thought it so desirable under the circumstances to be of the same opinion as the herd that he denied any such association. He was warming himself by the fire,—the fire of conventionality and false security. When he was again challenged, he cursed, and swore that he had nothing to do with Jesus; Peter had protested before that he would never forsake Jesus, but in the moment of trial he just as impetuously denied him. He would not "come out from among them," and be "separate." Jesus had said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword"—to all mortal beliefs. Peter wept bitterly when he realized his monstrous infidelity, but he was able to redeem his mistake later. That is what this story of Noah proceeds to show us how to do.

The Building of the Ark

In spite of the corruption and violence which were widespread, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Where there is Noah in our thought, there is always a way out from the inevitable havoc caused by

materialistic thinking. Noah acquaints himself with God, instead of with the "daughters of men."

Noah is now told to make an ark to save himself and his family from "the end of all flesh." Whenever we are disillusioned by the fickleness of the things of the flesh,—any belief of life or substance in matter,—it is a significant stage in our development, for there is born in us a great desire for substantial and unshakable good, for that which will not perish or let us down. And so we turn unreservedly to the spiritual, where alone can we find such a thing. If we are wise, we begin at that point to build up our understanding of spiritual facts,—the right conception of everything we seek, whether it be health or happiness or supply. That is our ark.

The directions which Noah is given for making the ark are quite explicit. The Bible is always definite when it comes to describing spiritual structures — think of the exact account of the city foursquare in Revelation, for instance. When we want to find refuge in fundamental truth, it is no good setting about it vaguely, and yet the general tendency of religion has been to think that one can find in an emotional belief in God lasting spiritual strength in the face of gathering floods. That which is based merely on emotion can be swept away if the tides of disaster are fierce enough. But the strength which is based on an intelligent understanding of the spiritual, and which has stood the test of experience's challenge, because in every detail of life its standard has not been forsaken—that strength is impregnable. Jesus said, "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

So our construction of a place of refuge has to be intelligent and orderly. Noah is first told, "rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." The rooms in a building make provision for specific requirements; our spiritual thinking is not to be vaguely vast, then, but is to take account of all our individual needs. Also, "pitch" is to make it proof against all possible infiltrations of fear or doubt or discouragement; that is to say, we must stoutly uphold in our lives (the without) the truth we proclaim (within).

Noah is next given measurements for the length, breadth, and height of the ark. The length symbolizes the line of orderly spiritual reasoning which we have to follow. One essential fact must lead to another in logical sequence, as in the days of creation, and this disproves the false logic of reasoning from material premises. The Psalmist says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." The breadth symbolizes that width of outlook which is the outcome of looking beyond personal limitations in order to become an individual channel for fundamental good; again, the Psalmist says, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." The height symbolizes the inspiration which must uplift our thinking to receive the full consciousness of perfection: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Then the ark is to be given a window and a door. The window in our ark is to let in the light of divine intelligence, and to allow us to look out and see

everything in the light of that intelligence, instead of "judging after the flesh." The door is to enable us to shut ourselves safely in while the storm is on, and to come out when the storm is over; Isaiah says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

The ark is also to have three storeys; that is, our understanding of spiritual truth in any situation rises in three stages. First of all, it causes us to see that "the flesh profiteth nothing." Then we take refuge in our understanding of spiritual truth, while the error of belief in the flesh destroys itself; "a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." And finally we rise to the height of seeing that "I am the Lord; and there is none else;" at that point the error has no place and no memorial. This essential threefold process is very clear in the story of Noah, and appears in several forms.

All Flesh To Be Destroyed

When the instructions for building the ark have been given, Noah is told: "behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." This may seem a harsh judgment on all flesh and also favouritism to Noah, but it symbolizes the wonderful fact that the material and evil element in our present experience has to go, but the good does not have to be swept away with it. The end of every error is inevitable, however inextricably we seem to be involved in it, but if we have the

spiritual strength to separate ourselves from the things of the flesh, then all that is good (all that reflects the divine nature, as outlined in the days of creation) remains alive with us.

Jesus illustrated this in the healing of the maniac of Gadara, as recorded in Mark 5. This man had an unclean spirit and behaved like a wild beast; "but when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. . . . Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand ;) and were choked in the sea." The "devils" which try to enter into each one of us may be rejected by our advancing sense of good, but they also ask to be allowed a definite home in the swinish element of human nature. Jesus, however, saw that they must be allowed no medium whatsoever, and the result was that the swine themselves "ran violently down a steep place into the sea," and were choked. The man was then seen "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." All that is impure and evil in any situation is doomed to destruction,—not just to be relegated to a corner as highly undesirable but inevitable in the order of things. Its nature is nothingness and it must return to nothingness. But the inherent good remains.

By Sevens and By Twos

Noah is told to take in with him male and female of every kind of creature, in order to "keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth." Into our ark we have to take our individual sense of everything and maintain its essential nature. We have to take "clean beasts" by sevens (the measure of perfection) and "unclean beasts" by twos. The "unclean beasts" in our experience are our selfish desires and ambitions, our hates and enmities and jealousies, our lingering diseases, our unsolved problems, our undesirable traits of character—all these have to be brought into our ark in order to be purified. If we try to leave these temporary evils out of our spiritual reckonings,—out of our ark,—we are not thorough-going and not even honest. But it is no good trying to force conditions to achieve the ideal in a moment; if we understood as much as Jesus, and manifested his love, unhealthy conditions would naturally surrender to the ideal immediately we came across them. But while our understanding is still immature, we can only strengthen that understanding systematically as best we can, and then let it bring forth fruit in its own due order, and as our worthiness increases.

Jesus made the same point in his parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. He told of a man who "sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." When the tares appeared, the man's servants asked if they should go and gather them up. But they were told, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." With our enthusiastic but

meagre understanding of spiritual ideas, we sometimes make violent and wilful attacks on some evil and expect its immediate collapse without more ado. Experience soon teaches us the vanity of this, and wisdom substitutes the uncompromising patience which waits for the "harvest" of mature and fully realized understanding. This waiting is not giving in to evil, nor does it ever countenance evil as really substantial, but through its pure and steadfast sense of the reality it takes one progressive step (however small) at a time and consolidates its position constantly until the goal is slowly but surely reached.

Noah Enters the Ark and the Flood Begins

"Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth." Whenever we too have dominion over every element in our consciousness, we can face the flood with the authority of the sixth day of creation.

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him,"—our "family" consists of all the right ideas we associate with ourselves,—"into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. . . . And it came to pass after seven days,"—after the assimilation of what we know of the perfection of spiritual things,—"that the waters of the flood were upon the earth . . . the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." The truth of the second day of creation seemed to be disproved at this point, because the firmament had been erected for the specific purpose of restraining the waters above the heaven and under the heaven, and yet now they were flooding the earth. Chaos had taken the place of order. That often seems to be the case

in our experience, and we can either let self-pity submerge us, or else we can be like Noah and get into the ark to disprove for ourselves that the divine order ever can be repudiated. Malachi says, "prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." We can always regard a flood of trouble as a blessing, rather than as a catastrophe, if we look upon it as an opportunity to prove the supremacy of spiritual fact in the teeth of fierce opposition.

"And the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth." The challenge of the flood keeps our thought up, from a determination not to be overwhelmed by the sense of defeat and failure. That is true of any time of crisis in human affairs, but mere human will may crack under this strain, whereas divine ideas can stand endless opposition because they are by their very nature unopposable. In Revelation 12 the great red dragon "cast out of his mouth water as a flood" in order to swallow up the woman who had brought forth the man child; but the earth swallowed up the flood, and the woman was given "two wings of a great eagle," in order to fly into the wilderness, where she had "a place prepared of God," and where she was "nourished . . . from the face of the serpent." So the flood serves only to give wings to our understanding, and causes us to experience the tender provision of infinite good for our well-being.

"And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." What we understand of spiritual perfection very often brings the opposing evidence of physical sense down upon us in torrents of abuse. This evidence screams that a certain evil is an inescapable material fact before our eyes;

that it paints itself forcibly in our own consciousness, so that we feel its unpleasantness; that our animal instincts accept it and expand it; and that it has foundations, which give it continuity and perpetuity. For instance, someone may appear hateful; you agree as to their hatefulness; you indulge in hating them; and you do not see how you can stop hating them. The children of Israel had to face a similar fourfold barrage of materialism when they were in the wilderness for forty years, and Jesus faced and overcame it when he was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Noah, too, proved the substancelessness of this flood of assertion: we read that all flesh was destroyed and that "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

The Ark Rests

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged"—the power of God forced the waters to abate. The wind set all opposition at nought. Isaiah says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him;" that standard irresistibly arrests the development of every flood.

"And the ark rested in the seventh month . . . upon the mountains of Ararat." "Ararat" means "holy land." There we have an echo of the seventh day of creation, the day of divine rest in the "beauty of holiness." The ark could rest because it had fulfilled its purpose, and so it brought a sense of heaven on earth.

The Raven and the Dove

"And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth." Noah wanted to know whether the flood had really gone down; and we can never leave our ark until we do know that the floods of trouble have ceased to leave any trace whatsoever.

Sometimes, like Noah, we make the initial mistake of sending out a raven,—an unclean, predatory bird, and an object of superstition,—but he brings no reliable information and never returns. His opinion as to how things are going is swayed only by the changing face of circumstances. The raven state of thought is haphazard, not founded upon the certainty of rocklike fact, and therefore may be full of cheerfulness at one moment and full of depression the next. It may muddle through, but no credit is due to it if things come right in the end.

At other times we have the wisdom to send forth a dove, a symbol of that state of thought which acquaints itself intelligently with God, and is then at peace, waiting for the fulfillment of the divine purpose. The first time we send her forth, she finds "no rest for the sole of her foot,"— she cannot find any tangible evidence of the divine fact in some condition, but she still retains her hope and faith. So Noah pulls her back into the ark (he lets his peace return to him) and waits "yet other seven days;" just so, when we first meet with no response, we resolve to add quietly to our understanding of the spiritual. Next time she is sent forth, the dove comes back in the evening (when thought is at rest) with an olive leaf in her beak, showing

that the flood has subsided a great deal; this time some improvement is definitely manifest. This is not the moment to relax our efforts, however, with the hope that everything will go on improving of its own accord, and so we wait yet another period of "seven days," while we seek the spiritual with renewed sincerity, and then we send the dove forth the third time. She does not return to us now, because she can find a place for the sole of her foot—human consciousness and fundamental spiritual fact have coincided.

We can see in very small compass the same three stages in Jesus' healings—for instance, in the story of the healing of the blind man, recorded in Mark 8: "And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly." The man's blindness corresponds to the dove finding no place for the sole of her foot. His partial restoration of sight, so that he can see "men as trees, walking," corresponds to the return of the dove with the olive branch—a greatly improved state, but still not perfectly healed. Finally, the man sees "every man clearly"—the dove does not have to return. This is the only recorded occasion on which Jesus was not at once wholly successful, and it is encouraging to us, because it shows in slow motion, as it were, the method which Jesus used and which is available to each one of us. These sendings forth of the dove require great patience and perseverance, but there is no achievement without unremitting effort and unselfed love.

All the symbols in this story of Noah are marvelously exact. The fact that they are picturesque puts them at a discount in our rather prosaic age, but in this very quality lies their memorableness and their universality.

Noah Removes the Covering of the Ark

At last the flood is over: "the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry." At this point spiritual strength can lay down its weapons and enjoy the peace of victory. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Then Noah builds an altar and sacrifices to the Lord, who "smelled a sweet savour." That is a primitive way of indicating that gratitude for deliverance brings an atmosphere of blessing into our lives.

The Bow in the Cloud

God next blesses Noah and his sons, and tells them: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." A covenant is then established with Noah, and the symbol of it is a bow which is to appear in the cloud; this is to betoken that God will not again bring a flood of waters upon the earth. The rainbow is made up of seven distinct colours, and "seven" was always used as a symbol of perfection by the Hebrew writers. So there is always a bow in the cloud if we look to the seven days of creation, those "seven pillars of wisdom," upon which all reality is founded. If we are only alert enough to keep our gaze steadfastly on that bow whenever a cloud of trouble appears on our horizon, then we can forestall the trouble, and we need never be overwhelmed by it—it will prove abortive. As Paul says,

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape."

If a cloud creeps up on us, it is only because we have failed to see the bow in that cloud. The bow is always there for those who have eyes to see it. Again and again this story of Noah brings out the necessity for watchful discernment, immediately separating from all that is not purely good and abiding in the ark until the flood dies down.

Ham, Shem, and Japheth

Noah did not always see the bow in the cloud, because we next hear of his relapse: he got drunk and was "uncovered within his tent." The little story that follows brings out very plainly the characters of Noah's three sons,—Ham, Shem, and Japheth,—and those three sons again represent three stages of thought in Noah's experience. We have already seen this three-tiered symbol in the story of Adam, appearing as Cain, Abel, and Seth. We might call it the "bad-better-best" strain which runs throughout the Scriptures in various forms.

Ham, which means "heat" or "black," saw "the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without." This unpleasant state of thought prides itself on "not glossing over the facts," though all it is ever doing is subscribing to mortal belief as fact. The Ham state of mind in us can only see the bestial in others and then loves to talk about it.

But then Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth, came along and adopted a very different method. They "took a garment, and laid it upon

both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness." They were looking "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," and they were reflecting in some measure the profoundly important fact that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and [cannot] look on iniquity." Shem and Japheth represent that which is able to see beyond the temporary evil to the underlying good in every individual. On the human plane the qualities of compassion, affection, and tolerance achieve this, but within limits; even the kindest heart or the sternest sense of duty can be faced with conditions which seem beyond the power of redemption by human love. But love of the caliber of Jesus' is rooted not merely in nobility of sentiment, but in an unshakable understanding of that universal Principle of good which reflects itself and proves that the real man can be used only as a channel for good and can never be induced to act as a medium for evil.

Jesus may be said to have "gone backward" with a "garment" on his "shoulders" when he was confronted by the woman taken in adultery, just as Shem and Japheth were confronted by Noah's backsliding infidelity to his ideals. Jesus "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them [her Ham-like accusers] not." He forced them to withdraw from their condemnation, because he himself saw, not barefaced impurity, but womanhood clothed with purity, and he saw it so fully that he was able to say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more," knowing that she would justify his scientific compassion.

The Story of Babel

The story of Babel in Chapter 11 also forms part of the second thousand-year period. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines "language" as "A vocabulary and way of using it;" is not that what the Bible offers us—the ability to learn the meaning of spiritual ideas and how to use them? What more could we ask? Yet what we next read of is the grandiose attempt to make a city and tower on earth to ape the grandeur and order of spiritual ideas in their infinite relationships. No organization for world peace can hope to be successful if merely founded upon community of material interests, instead of upon the common God-given rights of man.

The first fatal mistake made by the builders in this story of Babel is the use of brick (made from clay, and so symbolizing Adamic beliefs, which can never be erected into a unified structure), instead of stone (symbolizing substantial spiritual facts). The second mistake is the use of slime instead of mortar; no abiding harmony comes about if there is any taint of hypocrisy, but only through the unselfed love which sees that every man has his place and function in the divine order. The result of these two fatal mistakes is confusion (the meaning of "Babel"), misunderstanding, and division.

The obvious contrast is afforded by the picture in Acts of the apostles all working together in mutual understanding and love, without any self-aggrandizement, because although they had "diversities of gifts," they recognized that it was "the same Spirit" which had implanted these gifts individually.

Today we can see that no organization for world peace can hope to be successful if it is founded merely on human egotism, but if it is based on a humble recognition of the common God-given rights of man and of each nation's unique contribution to the whole.

A Summary

This second thousand-year period is so profound in its detail that it is impossible here to do more than just indicate its richness. But what are the outstanding points of this story of Noah and the ark, and how do they apply to us?

1. Every time we have enough spiritual strength and purity not to find the "daughters of men" fair, we see the basic unreality of some evil element in our experience; as soon as we see that, we separate ourselves from its inevitable self-destruction by constructing an ark of understanding.
2. By entering that ark we prove the supremacy and substance of spiritual fact in spite of the flood,—the worst forces that evil can muster against us.
3. This experience brings it home to us that there is always an orderly way out, which unfolds greater and greater spiritual good.

At first it may seem too difficult even to make an ark; it is not easy, but the alternative is victimization by the flood. As we make it a habit to enter our ark, it becomes progressively easier and more natural to us, and nothing brings greater blessing.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABRAHAM

THE Bible indicates the fundamental Science of being,—that which can be learned systematically and proved to be basic truth. The more we study it with humility and in an ordered way and thus let its Science unfold to us, the more we appreciate the Bible as embodying the answer to every questioning. It is a textbook for all time, because its symbols are irrepressibly fresh, and it meets our need whether we are looking for the most transcendent vision of spiritual things or for relief from some situation which seems desperately difficult.

In our opening chapter we looked at the basis of the Bible,—the story of the seven days of creation, which presents in a nutshell the nature of the infinite as it appears to humanity. Then, in the second chapter, we saw something of the significance of the Adam story, which occupies the first thousand-year period of Bible history. In the third chapter we considered the second thousand-year period, with the story of Noah's deliverance from the flood illustrating the second day of creation as a dynamic factor in our experience. Now we come to the story of Abraham, which ushers in the third thousand-year period; it illustrates the third day of creation, in which the dry land first appeared and brought forth vegetation. The appearing of dry land symbolizes the formation of definiteness in our thinking,—definiteness about spiritual facts,—and that must always bear fruit.

The story of Abraham is one which comes home to us very forcibly every time we find that our spiritual aspirations set us on a new and more worthwhile course. It describes the returning springtime in our lives, when

discontent with the old limitations pushes up the seeds of progress into strong young shoots. It is the story of the fulfillment of a great vision in spite of all handicaps and mistakes. The setbacks and temptations which Abraham encountered were always due to his own fear or laziness or impatience or sensuality. And so the record is useful for us in pointing out the dangers which beset a progressive purpose once it has taken its first definite shape in our thought and before it is fulfilled in its perfection.

"Get Thee Out of Thy Country, . . ."

We first hear of Abram (he was not given the name Abraham till later) towards the end of Genesis n; there we read of Abram's father, Terah, taking him and his wife (Sarai) and his nephew (Lot), and leaving Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan. Ur was a centre of the cult of the Babylonian moon-god and the Chaldees were keen astrologers, and so it is as if we to-day should reject the current superstitions of our time and the systems of science, theology, and medicine offered by human intellectualism and set out to find some definite understanding of the basic Principle of our being. But instead of going forward into Canaan, the four of them went as far as Haran and then stayed there. There was no more progress till Terah died. "Terah" means "delay" or "wandering," and it is never until we lose the tendency to procrastinate and be indefinite that we can make real strides. If we say, "Oh, there's no hurry—let's be satisfied with the little progress we have made," then we soon settle down into carpet-slipper ways.

But it was a divine demand which had come to Abram, and so it had to be obeyed. That demand was, first, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy

kindred, and from thy father's house." The "country" in which we all find ourselves is mortality,—the universal belief that we are born into a physical body, live in it for a brief period of mixed pleasure and pain, and then die. What a pathetic notion of a being who can think about eternity and infinity, or who can love unselfishly without regard to his own survival! But the truth about man, as the Bible puts it, is that he is made in the image and likeness of God. That leads us to ask, What is the nature of God ? and the answer is first summarized in the story of the seven days of creation at the beginning of Genesis and then illustrated throughout the Scriptures. Jesus showed constantly that it is possible to use an understanding of man's relation to God to disprove the lie of mortality. So each one of us needs to see that in our true state of being we are not imprisoned in a corporeality and liable to a thousand ills, but eternally existent as incorporeal expressions of the infinite good. How could an idea of infinite good be confined to one place or have a beginning and an ending? To think that it could is as absurd as to think that $2 + 2 = 4$ suddenly came into being or is not always available.

Who are our "kindred"? They are the collection of beliefs which we have in common with some of our fellow-beings. Each of us thinks that we are of a certain race and colour and nationality; that we are either male or female, and of a certain social class and occupation; that we are a certain number of years old, and that we are living in a particular historical period. We believe that those classifications colour our whole lives and make us behave according to them. You hear people saying, for instance, "Mr. So-and-so is a typical elderly English professor." This kind of false label is highly adhesive unless we accurately identify ourselves as fundamentally quite apart from it.

Our "father's house" which, like Abram, we also have to leave is a symbol of our personal inheritance,—the belief that our particular bodies and characters have much the same advantages and disadvantages as those of our parents and ancestors. And yet if the fact of our being is entirely apart from the belief of having been born through sex into a physical body, then there is no necessity to pay the penalty for that belief. "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" says Malachi, and Paul writes, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him,"—prove our sonship in the face of all opposing evidence,—"that we may be also glorified together."

"Thou Shalt Be a Blessing"

So the demand on Abram was, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:"—the purpose of life is surely to let our own individual sense of things be such that it is a blessing:—"and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:"—if we start from the right individual standpoint, then all things in our experience can only "work together for good," as Paul says:—"and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." What a majestic vision! Abram saw that to realize the truth about ourselves is to see our individual, collective, and universal significance. This, then, was the shining inspiration of all Abram's journeyings. We soon hear that he and his wife and nephew and household "went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

As we leave "country" and "kindred" and our "father's house"—and we don't leave them in a moment, but only through persistently rejecting them—we are ushered towards the "land" of our true selves. Instead of seeing ourselves in the light of the world's labels, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us,—as filled with the intelligent thinking symbolized by the light of the first day of creation; filled with the discernment of abiding good symbolized by the firmament of the second day; filled with the certainty symbolized by the dry land of the third day; filled with the sense of right relationship symbolized by the solar system of the fourth day; filled with the unlimited abundance symbolized by the birds and fishes of the fifth day; filled with the dominion symbolized by the man of the sixth day; and filled with the peace of perfection symbolized by "and he [God] rested on the seventh day." This new sense of ourselves is nothing less than revolutionary.

Abram in Egypt Disowns His Wife

Soon after this great vision, Abram "builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord;" his sense of God had become much more definite to him. But he allowed fear to get the better of him when a severe famine caused him to go down into Egypt: there he told his wife Sarai that she must pass as his sister, because she was so fair that the Egyptians would kill him in order to have her for themselves.

What does this signify to us in our journeying towards the "promised land" of our true identity? If we let there be a "grievous famine" of spiritual vision in our thinking, so that we see only the want and woe evidenced by the physical senses, then we go down into the paganism of "Egypt" and

become afraid to identify ourselves fully with our ideal. "Wife" in the Bible stands for the best to which a man is wedded in his thinking, – his highest sense of things. And so we sometimes haven't the moral courage to admit that we are intimately associated with our "wife", we imagine that we shall lose something if it is known we have a wonderful spiritual ideal, and therefore we minimize its relation to us.

The result in this case was that Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house – and in consequence material riches were showered upon Abram; but "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Pharaoh and his household were smitten by the Lord with diseases because of Sarai –their materialism couldn't stand the ever-present rebuke of a high ideal – and so eventually Pharaoh demanded of Abram why he hadn't told then that Sarai was his wife, and then he had them both sent away. They at length got back to the altar which Abram had previously set up; in other words, every time we falter in identifying ourselves definitely with our ideal, because we fear the consequences, we temporarily forfeit the respect we might have won and we only have to retrace our steps.

When blind Bartimeus wanted to attract the attention of Jesus (see Mark 10:46-52), he refused to put off (unlike Abram in this incident) he had the courage to be persistent in identifying himself with his highest vision of man and his God-given rights, although "many charged him that he should hold his peace," probably feeling that his was a hopeless case. This only intensified his appeals, until finally "Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called," and Bartimeus, "casting away his garment," – his sense of identity, –"rose, and came to Jesus." He then asked that he might receive

his sight, –a true perception of God and man and everything in the universe, – and he was healed.

Abram Separates From Lot

The next important step in our progress comes every time we separate from Lot, as Abram had to do." And Lot also, which went with Abram had flocks, and herds and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great." Abram decided that as there wasn't room for both of them they must separate, and so he invited Lot to choose which way he he would go. Lot chose the well-watered plain, be cause it looked like the " garden of the Lord" (the garden of Eden, is a symbol of the physical body, as we have already seen) and like Egypt (materialism and paganism again); he pitched his tent towards Sodom, the men of which were "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

We find our spiritual progress constantly impeded y the easy-going "Lot",--a natural sponge for absorbing the evidence of the senses. Lot loves to gossip away the hours, filling our minds with his "flocks, and herds, and tents," – keeping our thoughts busy in mere speculation about pleasure or pain in the future, in remembering pleasant or unpleasant experiences in the past and in ruminating on our own or other peoples feelings in the present. This accomplishes nothing in the right direction and crowds out definite thinking based on God, but it appears so harmless that we don't really see the extent of the damage which Lot had done to our progress until we resolve to give our sense of fundamental realities the room it

needs. Then we see that Lot is not only just lazy, but is also heading towards the self-indulgence of Egypt and towards Sodom, or sensuality.

"Look From the Place Where Thou Art"

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." It was only when Abram had separated himself from Lot that he could rise to the point of seeing that he could inherit as much of the "land" of his true self as he saw clearly. Lot , keeps our vision of that "land" blurred.

How can we today look "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward" from the place where we are in thought? The four points of the compass are a Biblical symbol of four profoundly important aspects of the infinite as it appear to us. By means of them we can always plot our course to a definite conclusion. The first impulse of any value in solving a problem is the search for an answer, the second turning-point is when the answer dawns on us individually; the third is our acceptance and use of that answer; and the fourth is when we forget that there was ever a question, or ever a search , ever a mental conflict of any kind. The Bible is full of wonderful natural illustrations of this fourfold process.

To take a simple example: in Matthew's story of the birth of Jesus there is first the diligent seeking of the wise men for the young child; the "the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Then the wise men "rejoiced with exceeding

great joy" at the sight of the star and offered gifts to the child, who was taken down into Egypt to avoid being slaughtered according to Herod's decree; and finally Joseph and Mary and the child could all go back to Israel because "they are dead which sought the young child's life." This symbolizes what happens every time we turn to the Science of reality when faced by some unhappy state of affairs. First we seek diligently for an answer in what we know of God; then the specific answer we need is shown to us as unmistakably as the young child's dwelling was identified for the wise men; then we not only rejoice in that answer, but we also use it in practical ways to overcome our difficulty—we take the young child into Egypt, and thus prove that the spiritual fact is supreme over materialism; and finally the spiritual truth we have learned becomes so normal and natural to us that there is no longer any opposition to it—"they are dead which sought the young child's life."

So Abram was to look "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward," and he was further told to arise and travel the length and breadth of the land which he saw. When we have taken our bearings according to the highest that we know of God, we then have to familiarize ourselves with the new realm which opens out before us.

Abram Rescues Lot and Is Blessed by Melchizedek

Chapter 14 is concerned with a story of warfare between four kings and five other kings near the Dead Sea; in this warfare Lot (who was now living in Sodom) became embroiled and was taken prisoner. Abram then had to go with a body of men and rescue him by defeating the enemy kings.

We have seen that Abram stands for a clear vision of our true self, whereas Lot stands for a drifting, worldly sense of things. The Abram in us may separate himself from Lot but until he can finally repudiate Lot altogether as part of his make-up, he always has to rescue him by exercising dominion over the sorry conditions to which Lot falls victim. It is no use ignoring the plight in which our foolish complacency lands us; instead we have to face the issue decisively and turn the experience into a blessing.

This is exactly what happened with Abram, because as soon as he had delivered Lot, he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem (which means "peace"), who brought him bread and wine and then blessed him. The writer of Hebrews describes Melchizedek as "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God." This writer saw that Abram realized at this point his own eternal spiritual selfhood, which is all that enables us to have dominion over the effects of the Lot state of thought.

Mark records that Jesus was once in a ship and "there were .also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Jesus himself was unworried by the storm, but he arose and rebuked it for the sake of those around him, just as Abram rescued Lot from being overwhelmed in the storm of sensual conflict. In the same way, we can begin to use our dominion as "children of God" to bring

peace into conditions stirred up by the wind,—by anything which seems overwhelmingly violent,—and moved by tides of fear.

Abram Promised His Own Heir

The story goes on that the Lord appeared to Abram in a vision and said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Then Abram said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." But the answer came, "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."

If we are alive to it, this is a promise which is fulfilled for every one of us. The promise is that the right idea of any situation will be born to us individually. So we need never imagine that we are not spiritually-minded enough to have our own "heir;" nor should we ever be content with someone else's right idea of the situation or with a merely intellectual sense of a spiritual truth which we don't yet feel within ourselves. When we are sincerely seeking the solution to some difficulty, we may first of all discern that we need to bring into our experience some particular aspect of the divine nature, but this is often an acknowledgment by the head of a truth which we don't at once feel with the heart. But always, if we are in earnest, the idea will be born to us in our own way and with a certainty and a joy which are unmistakable.

It is something like learning to ride a bicycle: at one time it seems to the child that he will never get the knack, although he knows what he is supposed to do, and then suddenly there comes the moment when he first

gets the feeling of it and can keep his balance as he goes forward. Then the ability to ride a bicycle is his for good.

To Abram the stumbling-block was that Sarai was barren; we are told that right at the beginning of the story. The symbol of a barren woman and a childless couple recurs throughout the Bible: think of the Shunammite woman and her husband (II Kings 4) and of the parents of Samson (Judges 13) and of Samuel (I Samuel 1) and of John the Baptist (Luke 1). To all these came the promise of a son, and its fulfillment in spite of every human impediment.

The Lord now said to Abram, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Stars are a wonderful symbol of distinctness and infinity.

Abram's sacrifice of animals and birds at this point indicates that in order to inherit the "land" of our true identity we have to give up a merely physical sense of ourselves as endowed with animal propensities. He also had a vision of the four hundred years' oppression and bondage which his descendants were to endure—another symbol of the fact that the inheritance of good does not come about without a struggle. But Jesus said to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"—and individually we too have to overcome all mortal beliefs.

Abram Takes Hagar to Wife

Abram was still very conscious that Sarai had borne him no children, and so he accepted her advice to have a child by her Egyptian maid Hagar. The result was friction between Hagar and her mistress, and Hagar was told that her child would be a wild man with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

Sometimes we cease to trust that our ideal can possibly conceive and bear us a "child," and discouragement and impatience turn us to some human expedient—with unsatisfactory results. We try to substitute a forced birth through dubious means—an Egyptian slave could have been a symbol only of a grossly material point of view—for the birth which always comes about in due order when we resist the temptation to forsake our ideal.

Jesus said to the Pharisees when they tried to get him to show them a sign from heaven, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Because he prayed to the Lord, Jonah was vomited out onto the dry land after three days and nights in the whale's belly. If we look for a "sign," our affection for spiritual things becomes adulterous and we are really putting the cart before the horse. But if we have a pure affection for and understanding of the eternal foundations of health or happiness or whatever it is we long for, then we inevitably come out onto the "dry land" of definite salvation, both divinely and humanly. In other words, the cart comes after the horse of its own accord when our love for spiritual ideas is not just "cupboard love," and we trust those ideas to care for us, not necessarily as we outline, but in the way that is divinely right.

God's Covenant with Abraham

In Genesis 17 we read of the everlasting covenant which God made with Abram and his descendants; a sure sense of relationship was established between God and them. God promised that Abram would be "exceeding fruitful," and in token of this he was told that his name was no longer to be Abram ("exalted father") but Abraham ("father of many nations"). When we begin to see that there is a definite and ever-present relationship between ourselves and God (the fundamental Principle of our being), then our sense of our purpose in life expands immeasurably. Our vision of the truth about ourselves is bound to multiply, because it enables us to see more and more of the truth about all things.

It is interesting that Abram didn't receive his new name until he "fell on his face,"—until he had the genuine humility which is willing to give up every vestige of identity not based on the divine nature.

Abraham's obligation under this new covenant was to circumcise every man child, including all his slaves. Paul saw very clearly that this rite was only a symbol of inward purification; he said, "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."

Sarai's name was also changed—to Sarah—and she was promised a son. Sarai means "Jah [Jehovah] is prince," whereas Sarah means "princess." Abraham was beginning to add womanhood to his sense of God, and that sense will always enable our ideal to conceive a son for us. Luke tells us in Chapter 13 of his Gospel that Jesus once healed a woman who had had "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no

wise lift up herself." Jesus described her as "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound," and he said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"—he loosed her from any sense that her womanhood was unable to express itself fully. Abraham had the same sort of experience with his own sense of womanhood, symbolized by his wife.

God also made provision for Ishmael,—Abraham's child by Hagar. He was to be the father of a great nation. If we are in earnest, then even if we make a mistake, the consequences will be cared for and will finally prove a blessing.

Three Men at Abraham's Tent

As Abraham was sitting in the doorway of his tent at noon, he "lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, . . ." There were three men, but Abraham addressed them as "My Lord"—a wonderful symbol, as we shall see, of the threefold nature of the infinite, which is always the One. Abraham hastened to fetch his guests water and bread and begged them to rest themselves under the tree and to "comfort [their] hearts." He then set before them butter and milk and "a calf tender and good," which he had had dressed by a young man. All these are symbols of the fresh, young sense of motherhood which was coming to Abraham and which enabled him to welcome and nourish a full sense of God in his thought.

The purpose of the visit was to announce to Abraham that Sarah was indeed going to have a son, Isaac. Sarah laughed at this because it

seemed impossible on account of her age, but she was to find that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Her bitter laughter was to turn into the laughter of real joy; "Isaac" means "laughter."

Why should the essential nature of the infinite be threefold? Because, in order to be complete, it must embody fatherhood, motherhood, and sonship. It must be creative and sustaining; it must be conceptive and a comforter; and it must have a perfect offspring. Think what a good symbol we have of this in every home where the father provides the income and the wise guidance, the mother cares for and loves unstintingly every member of the family, and the children respond to their parents' provision and care by being healthy, happy, and intelligent.

And so it suddenly comes to us as clear as the noonday as we meditate on the nature of the infinite—this is what happened with Abraham—that the only reason why anything good takes place in our experience is that the eternal Father is always revealing to the seeker useful ideas of Himself; that the all-loving Mother is forever fulfilling the divine purpose, which covers all human needs; and that the perfect Son is continually expressed in the acknowledgment of this Father and Mother. It is only the dense blindness of mortality which beholds all this so dimly that it sees for the most part lack, fear, and victimization.

Sodom To Be Saved Even For Ten Righteous

Next comes a little story of how Abraham interceded with the Lord for Sodom, the city notorious for sin. He begged that Sodom might be saved if there were fifty righteous men in the city; then if there were forty-five; then

thirty; then twenty; and then just ten. The Lord agreed each time to save Sodom for the few righteous. This symbolizes that whatever is of good in the worst situations will be saved, and that if we have only a very small understanding of spiritual things, it will never be unavailing if we use it.

We read in II Kings 4 that when a widow came to Elisha and told him that her husband (who had been a member of the prophetic order) was dead and that her sons were going to be taken as slaves by her creditor, Elisha asked her what she had in the house; she answered, "Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil"—oil was used for cooking and for light. Elisha thereupon told her to borrow empty vessels from her neighbours and fill them with this oil when she had shut the door upon herself and her sons. She found that she could go on pouring the oil until she had filled all the vessels. Then Elisha told her to go and sell the oil to pay her debt and use the rest to live on. If only we will use what we already have in our consciousness of the oil we need! That oil signifies all that we have learned of God through reason and revelation, and the way to use it is to pour it fearlessly into our thoughts of everything around us. As we do that, we find that we have a regular income of ideas and can cancel all debts to what Peter calls our "adversary the devil," who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

The Two Angels and the Last of Lot

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them." He persuaded them to stay the night with him, and did his best to keep at bay all the men of Sodom, who clamored for intercourse with the two strangers. Lot was

nearly overwhelmed, but the two angels pulled him into the house with them, shut the door, and struck the Sodomites with blindness. The only way they could get the still easy-going Lot to leave the city, which was to be burned, was to take him by the hand and bring him out themselves. All this was done for Abraham's sake, but even so Lot couldn't finally be saved. He was told not to look back towards Sodom, but his wife disobeyed and was turned into a pillar of salt. The last we hear of Lot is that he was duped into incest with his daughters, who made him drunk.

Now, this is a story of what happens in our experience as our ideal begins to bring forth for us. At this point we have to repudiate Lot; however anxious we are to avoid doing so, we are forced to see that his outlook is a completely stagnant one without a spark of real life, and finally that he is nothing but a mesmerized absorption in the things of the body.

We begin to see that Lot stands for all the manifestations of sex, which is basically the deep-rooted belief that man is imprisoned in a physical body and constituted in such a way that he seeks satisfaction through contact with other physical personalities. It is this belief which makes mortals full of self-consciousness and self-advertisement, full of loneliness and dissatisfaction, full of a sense of inferiority, and of resentment when they fail to draw attention to themselves in the way they would wish. The sex belief gives free play to the male instinct to be dominant and aggressive and to the female instinct to be subtle, seductive, and possessive. But the whole belief is one of blindness,—blindness to everything that the "two angels" represent.

The "two angels" are the right idea of manhood and womanhood. The more we entertain these angels, the more we see that it is our birthright to enjoy both manhood and womanhood; then we refuse to let the sex belief degrade us to the level of animals and blind us to the wonderful truth about universal manhood and womanhood, identified both in our individual selves and in happy relationships which bring deep and abiding satisfaction.

The Scriptural writers symbolize manhood and womanhood elsewhere by Michael and Gabriel, the two angels who appear in the Books of Daniel and Revelation and in Luke's Gospel. Michael represents true manhood; he strengthened Daniel and confirmed him in the truth, and in Revelation he led the victorious hosts of heaven against the great red dragon. Gabriel, on the other hand, represents true womanhood; he came swiftly to Daniel in order to give him "skill and understanding," and brought to Zacharias and to Mary glad tidings of birth and blessings to come and dispelled their fears. The vision and strength of manhood and the lovely tenderness of womanhood – both can be ours if we choose, because both are ours inherently, although hidden in varying degrees by the lies of the sex belief.

The Birth of Isaac

The next important incident is the actual birth of Isaac, the name which means "laughter." Sarah said, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" – that which is divinely natural seems joyfully miraculous on earth . But it is divinely natural that there should be the birth of an Isaac for every Abraham, because the sincerely seeking thought must bear fruit. Isaiah writes, "For as the rain cometh sown, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it

bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

"Cast out this Bondwoman and Her Son"

When Abraham made a great feast at Isaac's weaning, Sarah noticed Hagar's son Ishmael mocking, and so she told Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwomen shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Abraham was at first loath to do this, because Ishmael was his son, but God told him to obey Sarah.

Taken literally this would indicate great harshness, but its deeper meaning is that when a "son" is born to us in God's due time and through adherence to our highest spiritual ideal, then our proper course is to get rid of the mocking reminder of our past mistakes, The past always mocks us, but the remedy once we have profited by its lessons is to rejoice quite freely in our newborn "son" and see that our mortal history has nothing to do with our eternal being as immortal idea; then we cease to pay the penalty for a mere record of dreams, just as we never go on paying the penalty for a miscalculation in arithmetic once we have corrected it.

John wrote in Revelation, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." – symbolized here by Isaac, for what is our "son" but our sense of heaven and earth, created through our understanding of God? – "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away," –Ishmael cannot be the heir alongside Isaac, our mistakes need never remain with us once we have

learned from them, – " and there was no more sea" – no more uncertainty, but only the flourishing "dry land."

Again we see in this story of Abraham how our mistakes are cared for, because when Hagar was banished with Ishmael and was weeping in the wilderness at the thought of her child starving to death, an angel told her, "fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise lift up the lad ... for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened Hager's eyes so that she saw a well of water and was able to give her son something to drink. So an understanding of God redeems every mistake, enables us to exalt our sense of it. And opens our eyes to the inexhaustible source of ideas (the " well of water") forever at hand to quench all dissatisfaction and regret.

The Temptation to Sacrifice Isaac

Now comes the story of a temptation; God (or rather, Abraham's sense of God) told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, but just as he was about to do so , his hand was stayed and God told him that as he had not withheld his only son he must not sacrifice him. Instead Abraham sacrifices a ram which he saw caught in a thicket by his horns.

When we are perfectly willing to give up our highest human concept of good at this moment, because we love above all the spiritual fact which it represent, then we only find that we don't have to give up anything good .All w have to give up is our confused sense – a ram caught in a a thicket by his two horns – that the spiritual fact can ever be without a representative. If it could be, then there would be a vacuum, and we

should be subscribing to the notion that "God's in His heaven," but "all wrong with the world," and that that is how God wishes it to be!

Religious belief often makes people think that suffering is more holy than happiness, and that in order to show our love for God we must be patient martyrs and go with out affection or without love, or without health, or without gaiety or without adequate supply. We sometimes think that we should expect only a little bit of heave and a whole lot of hell, whereas we can always be expectant of infinite good when we see that divine ideas must be identifiable here and now at every level of experience, Our thought just has to be flexible enough – like Abraham's – not to cling desperately to our present sense of heaven on earth. Then we are never deprived of anything we need, because we see it as a good human expression of the divine fact – nothing more and nothing less.

Jesus constantly had to deal with a similar belief, – the belief that the Sabbath day was on of repression; healing on the Sabbath day was looked upon askance as too much like good to be justifiable or respectable! Yet the Sabbath day was instituted to commemorate God resting in the perfection of His creation. That is why Jesus restored a withered hand on the Sabbath day; his conscious resting in the perfection of God's creation set free a sense of God-given worth in the man, and this in its turn could not help but impel a healing of his hand, for the withered condition of the hand was solely an expression of the dried-up sense of manhood in thought, since the greater controls the lesser. The divine Motherhood of the seventh day sense of things meets our need for wholeness and

fulfillment at every level, as Abraham found in this incident. God is Love, not a being who strictly rations His kindness!

A Summary

After the account of the temptation to sacrifice Isaac, the story of Abraham merges into the story of Isaac. So if we now think of the story of Abraham as a whole, what is the main impression it leaves with us? That when we resolve to leave the mortal sense of ourselves in order to realize more of our true selfhood, then that resolve inevitably bears tangible fruit—in other words, the "dry land" of definite purpose begins to appear in our thought and then to bring forth. Even though we may become disheartened and make mistakes, that purpose cannot be frustrated if we are sincerely striving to follow the leadings of the divine demand, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee."