

A Pair of Queens

by Ray C. Stedman

Esther is one of the neglected books of the Bible. A number of people have said to me, "I don't think I've ever heard a sermon, or a series of sermons, on the book of Esther." I think that reflects something of the common attitude about this book. It is largely neglected as far as teaching from the pulpit is concerned, and oftentimes in private reading of the Scriptures as well.

Esther is a different kind of literature from anything you will find in the New Testament, and also from much that you will discover in the Old Testament; and, because it is a different kind of literature, I think perhaps we are a bit frightened by it. Perhaps it's so different because it's about a woman. I have lived with six women, and I feel that I am somewhat of an authority in this field!

There are three books in the Bible about women, all of which are of this particular type, so there may be more to that surmise than first appears. The book of Esther, the book of Ruth, and the Song of Solomon are all about women. They are all delightful stories, but in each one it is a bit difficult to get below the surface and discover what is hidden there.

If you have read this book of Esther, I'm sure you have found it an intriguing and fascinating story. It's a delightful story of human love and palace intrigue. Anyone who begins it will find himself fascinated till he reaches the end. But, perhaps, when you read it, you will wonder why it is in the Bible. You might think, "It's an interesting story and I'd appreciate it if it appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, but I really don't see much reason for it to be here in the Bible." It doesn't mention the name of God even once. There is no reference in it to worship, or to faith. There is no

prophecy of Christ. There is no mention of heaven or hell. In short, there is nothing very religious about this book.

How then did it find its way into the pages of the Bible?

Most commentators on the book of Esther take it as revealing the strange providences of God; that is, how God works behind the scenes. This, I think, is a very true approach to the book of Esther. It is an amazing revelation of how God works through natural means, and how he can bring about his will through the free-will choices of men who are unconscious of any coercion from God. And, yet, I don't think this, by any means, gets at the real teaching of this book.

The Apostle Paul, you remember, reminds us that all the things that happened to Israel happened as types or parables for us. This by no means indicates that these things did not really happen; they did happen. In some of the commentator's notes on books like Esther (and other books of the Bible) you will find suggestions at times that perhaps these things didn't actually occur, that they are legends, or myths, that have been gathered up and fictionalized, somewhat like a historical novel, and are presented to teach a certain lesson. Some commentators take that position with regard to the book of Esther. I don't think this can be established. There is a great deal of confirmation from secular history that these things did indeed happen. This is authentic history; it's not merely legend or myth, but it is recorded in such a way as to form a living parable for us of something that is true in our own experience, or could be true for us. Thus it is a wonderfully lucid, informative illustration of some great truth God would have us grasp.

This is the way we are going to approach this – as a parable – just as we would approach any of the parables that our Lord spoke in the New Testament. This was our Lord’s favorite method of teaching – to tell a story that would illustrate a point. Now the word *parable* means to “lay alongside,” to “cast down or throw down alongside of something.” This is the purpose of a parable – something you place alongside to make the meaning clear. The very first parable God ever gave was when he took a rib from the side of Adam and made a woman and laid her alongside of man. And, as man looked into woman’s face, he saw a reflection of his own character and personality and makeup. That was a parable! Men have been trying to interpret that parable ever since, and have come up with some rather strange explanations of it.

A parable, then, is really something designed to help you see yourself. Some of you ladies may be working in the kitchen some morning, busy making pies or other interesting pastry items, and while you are working away, you hear the doorbell ring. You are put into immediate panic because you are afraid that you are not presentable, so you run into the bedroom and grab a mirror and hold it up to your face (bring it “alongside”) and in that mirror you see yourself. That mirror is a parable to reveal to you what you look like at the moment. You hastily grab a towel and wipe off the smudge of flour that’s on your nose and straighten your hair and then run to the door. The parable has helped you to see what you’re like.

Now, that is what a parable is for, and that’s what this story of Esther is – so, as we approach this book, we will look for the story behind the story. As it unfolds, we will see that this story is really our story – that *we* are in this parable – that this is a drama revealing God at work in *our* lives, to do what he wants to do, and how he will do it. If we see this parable, then, in its proper setting, we will understand a great deal more of what God is doing in our own affairs today. This is one of the most vital and marvelous illustrations found in the Old Testament, and I hope that you will approach it with a sense of quickening excitement.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the book of Esther sets the stage for us, and introduces the action of the story. The title I have chosen for the study of these two chapters is, *A Pair of Queens*.

Now, if you think this reveals a misspent youth, wasting my time at a poker table, you’re wrong! At least, you’re wrong about what the Queen stands for. You may not be wrong about the poker! In poker, a pair of Queens can be topped by a pair of Kings, or a pair of Aces, but the figure of the Queen of Esther is more like the Queen in a chess game. The most powerful figure on the chess board, as any person who plays chess knows, is the Queen. She always is subject to the King, and interested in his welfare, yet she is the most powerful of the two.

So this story of Esther centers around a queen. It’s the story of a kingdom and its king and queen. It opens with a report of the magnificence of that kingdom. Let me read just a few verses from the opening chapter:

In the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital, in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants, the army chiefs of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces being before him, while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, a hundred and eighty days. And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace. There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. Drinks were served in golden goblets, goblets of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. And drinking was according to the law, no one was compelled; for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as every man desired. Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus. {Est 1:1-9 RSV}

The name of this king is never given to us. Ahasuerus is not his name, it is his title, like the word “Czar” or “Shah” or “Pharaoh.” There are several men identified in Scripture as Ahasuerus, not all the same man, because this is a common title. It means “The Venerable Father” and was an apt title for the king. Secular history identifies this man as possibly being Xerxes the Great, the one who attacked the power of Greece in the fourth century B.C., but it’s much more likely, I think, that this man is Astyages, the son of Cyrus the First, who is the one called in the book of Daniel, “Darius the Mede,” the man who took the kingdom from Belshazzar during the great drunken orgy in the city of Babylon on the night that Babylon fell. However, this is somewhat beside the point, for the fact that the name is never given to us here indicates that it is not too important.

If, as we read this story through, we hold it up as a mirror, we can see ourselves, because every person is just such a kingdom ruled by such a king as we have presented here. The body of man is his kingdom, and a marvelously intricate and complex kingdom it is.

Any of you who have studied about the intricacies of the human body know that the government of the body is a marvelous thing, intricately designed and wonderfully efficient – marvelously complex. And in control over all the life of the kingdom is the king, the soul of man, with the faculties of mind, emotion, and will. Whatever the king does affects the kingdom; whatever goes wrong with your soul – in the realm of your mind, your emotions, or your will – has an immediate effect on your body, the kingdom. You know that the body acts only upon responses which come from the mind, the emotions, and the will of man. Thus you can see how apt this allegory is.

But this is not all, for a king without a queen has no hope of a successor. When a king without a queen dies, the whole kingdom crumbles and perishes. If man were nothing more than a body and a soul, as Communism tells us he is, then when man dies he would die like an animal. There would be nothing beyond death, no immortality – nothing beyond. This is the philosophy which has captured the imagination of millions of people around the earth. The Communists have built upon it to say that man is nothing more than an animal; therefore

he can be bred like an animal – he can be improved in strain like an animal – he can be treated like an animal. There is no moral obligation to treat him any different way. But man is more than an animal. Man was also given a spirit, and that spirit is like a queen to a king. It’s the spirit of man which makes man an immortal being. It’s the spirit which does not perish, like his soul would if it were alone (like an animal’s soul) but continues on eternally. It’s in the realm of the spirit that man finds his comfort and refreshing and counsel from a Higher Being. It’s to the queen that the king goes for comfort and refreshing counsel – she is the place of his communion. You can see how beautifully this describes the most intimate, most essential activity of man’s nature; that is, what takes place deep in the recesses of his spirit. The union of the soul and the spirit in man is the most intimate and delicate known. There is only one thing that can expose it – the Bible says, “The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, making known the intents and purposes of the heart,” {cf, Heb 4:12 KJV}. This is the only thing that can reveal those things that go on down in the very innermost recesses of our life at the deepest level of our conscious existence.

Chapter 1 in this story of Esther is the story, then, of a king who tried to degrade his own queen; and when he found that it was impossible to do so, by his own choice, he cut himself off from her fellowship forever. I think if you will lay that parable alongside the story of man, you will see immediately how it reveals what has happened. At the point the story opens, we find the kingdom lying at peace – the king is holding a feast which lasts for a hundred and eighty days. That’s the longest feast I’ve ever heard of – about six months long. It reveals that there was no threat to this kingdom from the outside – it was a time of peace and blessing, fullness and fruitfulness. The king was perfectly free to do nothing but to display the lavish glory of the riches of that kingdom. The whole point of this is given to us in Verse 4, where we read the king “showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, ...”

Now, man is a king, the Bible says – but not by his own right. In the eighth Psalm, David sings about the nature of man. He says,

**When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
what is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him? {Psa 8:3-4 RSV}**

Then he answers his own question:

Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; {Psa 8:6a RSV}

Man, as God intended him, was made to be a king. And in properly governing himself and the earth, which is his domain, he would be displaying the majesty and the glory and the power of the God who indwelt him. This is what man was intended to be, and this is what man has never forgotten. We wonder what it is that motivates men to climb to the top of Mount Everest. What is there on top of Mount Everest that people must organize expeditions, lay out small fortunes, and risk their lives in order to see it? Nothing! Just the other side of the mountain, as the old song says. Well, then, why do they go up there? Because man has never forgotten that he was given dominion over all the earth; he was told to master it's forces; he was told to discover all it's mysteries and secrets, and thus to display the majesty of the glory and might of the God who indwelt him. This is man's function – man was made for the glory of God. So it was with Adam in the Garden of Eden – he had nothing to do but to serve this one function: to display in terms of his own human personality all the majesty, all the glory, all the wisdom, all the might of the God who indwelt him.

As we read this story in Esther, we find that this king, however, was not content to display the authority that was properly his. For as the party goes on, he seems to feel that the glory and majesty was of his own making. He was lifted up with pride and weakened by his own indulgence. He foolishly tries to pervert his own nature, in a sense, to satisfy his own evil ambition, and he sends for the queen to come and display all her beauty and glory before this crowd.

Why is it that whenever a man is lifted up with pride, he invariably hurts the one he loves?

In counseling with men and women, I have found this is the case – when we begin to act in pride, the first thing we do is take it out on our loved ones. When we become offended by something that has taken place in the office, we go home and snap at our wives and children. Or, in the case of the wife, if things haven't gone well in the home during the day, when the husband comes home at night, she scolds him as soon as he comes in the door.

Why do we do this?

Why is it we want to degrade the ones we really hold in highest esteem?

Well, it's simply the nature of sin. This is the story of human life – and this is what happened here. When this king was lifted up in pride, he began to fancy that the glory was really his – that it was all his making, and his doing, and then in his pride he sent for the one who ought to have been reserved for the intimate communion of his own private life to make mockery of her before all. But he found it could not be done.

Apply this, if you will, to the story of man as we trace it through the Scriptures:

Answer this question: When did man fall? When did Adam fall? Was it when Eve ate the apple? Isn't it amazing that when we read the story of man's *fall*, so-called, in Genesis 3, it isn't man's fall that is recorded, it's Eve's – it's the woman's fall. Did Adam fall then? No! Eve's fall is simply the way by which the tempter found his way into Adam's life. It was the channel by which he approached the man. Then when did Adam fall? He fell when he chose to assert the supremacy of his soul – his mind, emotions, and his will – over the revelation of truth which was available to him in the inner chambers of his spirit where he met God face to face. He tried to reverse the order of his own nature and to make his reason superior to revelation, and thus to downgrade and degrade the function of his spirit. He found it impossible to do; man cannot change his own nature. We are free to change the environment around us all we like; we can do whatever we like with all the chemical elements we discover and all the electronic forces we unveil, but to change our own nature is impossible.

In this account we find that, when the queen was summoned to appear before the king in this wrongful fashion, she refused to do so. As a result,

in a fit of anger and pride, the king made a choice from which he could not retreat – that he would no longer have anything to do with her:

- When Adam was approached by Eve with the fruit of disobedience,
- and he understood clearly what the issues were,
 - he deliberately chose what his reason said
 - over what God’s revelation taught,
- and he ate of the fruit of disobedience
- and, thus, cut himself off from the glory of God in his own spirit.

So he entered upon the lonely restlessness that has been characteristic of fallen man ever since.

Now, we have a strange thing introduced at this point of the story. In Verse 13, it says:

Then the king said to the wise men who know the times – for this was the king’s procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, {Est 1:13 RSV}

And then the men’s names are given:

“According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus conveyed by the eunuchs?” {Est 1:15 RSV}

What’s to be done with this woman who refused to obey the king? What’s to be done with this spirit which will not subject itself to the pride inherent in the soul? Then we read how he understood that this would have a very upsetting effect upon the whole kingdom, so in Verse 19 the sentence is passed:

“If it please the king, let a royal order go forth from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be altered, that Vashti is to come no more before King Ahasuerus.” {Est 1:19a RSV}

Here is a law which cannot be changed. Figuratively, it’s what is referred to in the book of Romans as the law of sin and death – unchangeable. We know it in secular life as the law of retribution, or the law of inevitable consequence; that is, we may have the right to make a choice, but we have no power to change the results of our choice when

it is made.

I may have before me two glasses of liquid, both looking like water. One is water – one is a glass of poison, and I know that it is poison. Now, I have a choice I can make: I can choose to drink the water if I please, or I may drink the poison. If I choose to drink the poison, I have exercised my own free will in making that choice, but once I make it, I no longer have control over what the results will be. I have set in motion a law which can never be changed or altered – the law of inevitable consequence. And when man chose, in the Garden, to give heed to the voice of his reason over the voice of revelation, when he elected to choose the desire of his own heart over that of the fellowship of God, he set in motion a string of circumstances which he was powerless to alter. He could not change it. It was the law of sin and death. So the human spirit became dark and unresponsive and no choice of man can alter that fact. Man became a soulish being, governed by his mind, his emotions, and his will – his own ego sitting on the throne of his kingdom brooking no opposition. He began to look only to his own mind, his own emotions, and his own will for wisdom to make the decisions of life. We have here the explanation of all the folly, injustice, evil, sin, misery and darkness of human life.

Chapter 2 is **the story of redeeming grace**. It begins with the king vainly seeking to satisfy his restless soul with a fruitless search for someone to fill the vacuum of his life. Right here, you could write the entire story of human life without God. Man – seeking, restless, dissatisfied – never daring to be alone with his own thoughts, always demanding something to anesthetize the pain of his own loneliness, looking ever for some mad, giddy whirl of continual pleasure – anything to keep him satisfied. This is the story of man. We read of that search in the opening verses of the chapter:

After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. Then the king’s servants who attended him said, “Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to

gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the capital, under custody of Hegai the king's eunuch who is in charge of the women; let their ointments be given them. And let the maiden who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so. {Est 2:1-4 RSV}

This is the account of the unending, restless search of man for something to satisfy the deep need of his heart.

Now, in Verses 5-7, we have introduced to us two of the most important characters of this story:

Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. He had brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother; the maiden was beautiful and lovely, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter. {Est 2:5-7 RSV}

Mordecai is perhaps the most important character in this story. He was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. We'll see something of the significance of that as the story develops later on. As a Jew, he was one of God's chosen agents by whom contact is made with all the race. This is the position of the Jew in human history.

Mordecai's name means "Little Man," that is, humbled man, and that immediately suggests the One who humbled himself and became man, who laid aside his glory and entered human life, becoming one of us, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:5-8).

As we trace the character of Mordecai through this story it is easy to recognize him as the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, whose task it is to exalt the One who came to redeem man, and whose specific work it is to restore man to the fellowship with God which he had lost. We'll find Mordecai fulfilling that function throughout this story.

Now the new queen (the new Spirit which is intended for the lonely soul of man) is Esther. Her

name in Hebrew, *Hadassah*, means "Myrtle," the lowly shrub that was commonly regarded as the symbol of Israel. Her Persian name is usually taken to mean "Star," but Gesenius, one of the great Hebrew authorities, says that it is taken from the word "to hide." It means "hidden," which I think is beautifully descriptive of the spirit of man.

Now, in this account, we read how Mordecai begins at once to bring Esther and the king together in a most natural and unaffected manner. He maneuvered to place Esther in the line of the king's search. I don't think I need to enlarge upon that as indicating how the Holy Spirit does this with man. The whole of the Bible is the account of God seeking man, yet man thinking that he is seeking God. How many times in the Scriptures do you not read some exhortation as, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found" {Isa 55:6}, and that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," {Heb 11:6 KJV}. Yet, when our search is ended we are invariably astounded to discover that it wasn't we who were seeking – it was God who found us! Just so, in this account of Esther, we have what may be the classic example of the old saying, "He pursued her until she captured him," for we read here of the king's search and yet, when it ends, Esther has come to the throne through maneuverers that he knows nothing about.

Now, there is a sense in which he had no right to have this girl. She belonged to a special race, a race that was forbidden by law to marry with another race. She was a Jewess, and yet here she is in this foreign land, and, by the sovereign, overruling grace of God, is placed in the line of the king's search; and when he finds her he knows that this is the one for whom his heart longs. How beautifully representative this is of the fact that we have no right to a redeemed spirit. Someone has well said, "The only right man has is to be damned," and if we insist upon our rights, that's where we'll end. But God in grace overrules, and places in the line of our search that for which we are looking. When our spirits are made alive and new by faith in Jesus Christ, we discover that this is the one thing that our life has been yearning for – that this is the One who satisfies the hunger of our souls.

So at last, as the story proceeds, Esther's turn came to be brought before the king:

When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had adopted her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal palace in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king gave a great banquet to all his princes and servants; it was Esther's banquet. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces, and gave gifts with royal liberality. {Est 2:15-18 RSV}

We may call this, if you like, the conversion of King Ahasuerus. He recognized in this lovely girl the answer to the empty restlessness of his life, and he set the sign of royalty upon her head, granted her authority in his kingdom, and thus found the beginning of a new life. Throughout the kingdom there is an immediate effect – there is a lifting of the burdens of taxation and a distribution of royal gifts with liberality.

Does this need interpreting? Isn't this exactly what the New Testament means when it says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" {cf, 2 Cor 5:17}? Life begins anew. There is a lifting of the burden and guilt of sin. There is a wonderfully refreshing quality about this life. We sing in the old hymn:

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.

Life begins anew!

The chapter closes with an account of how the entrance of Mordecai and Esther into the life of this king involved also deliverance from a plot which threatened the very life of the king:

When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Now Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had charged her; for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him. And in those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, become angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And this come to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king. {Est 2:19-23 RSV}

Here the life of the king is at stake – here is the first hint of the existence of an evil force which is at work to destroy and to capture the mind, emotions, and will of man, to pervert these to its own uses, and to oppose the glory of God's purpose in man's life.

You know that force well. It is at work in your own kingdom, and the life of the king is at stake. The soul of man is the prize in this great warfare, carried on within the soul of each of us. The enemy tries to strike, but Mordecai (who is now sitting in the gate as a judge in the city for he has not yet full access to the palace) discovers the plot, and the adversaries are taken out and publicly "nailed to a tree." This is literally what it says, "hanged on the gallows" is an interpretation. The literal Hebrew is that they were "impaled, or nailed to a tree."

In Colossians we read:

And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [you who were men and women in whom the Spirit had fallen into disuse and unresponsiveness, who had nothing beyond the life of a soul], **God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a pub-**

lic example of them, triumphing over them in him [that is, in the cross]. {Col 2:13-15 RSV}

“Triumphing over them in him” – this is what we find represented in this graphic account in the Old Testament: that there is in our lives an evil force which threatens to overcome us. The end of the story is not yet – but the enemy is known, and his doom is certain. All this, we are told, was recorded in a book that is available to the king. It was recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Medes and Persians. The king does not yet realize all that it means.

So God has recorded all that he has done for us in a book, and when we begin to understand what that book says about the deliverance that has been wrought for us, and realize what has been nailed to the tree and made a public example for us, we will begin to experience the deliverance that God intends for your life and mine.

Is this not where God has brought many of us today?

- We are Christians.
- We have known the restlessness of living without God.
- We have been engaged in a great search for something to satisfy.
- We have tried everything and have come at last to see that only in Jesus Christ is there satisfaction for the deep need of our hearts.
- We have received him and discovered that life began again.

We look back with delight to that day and we look onward to the certain and sure promise that we shall be with him in glory.

Ah, but what about in between? Conversion is just the beginning of the story. Did you think this was all there was to a Christian life? To know Christ and to look on to heaven some day and try to struggle through the best you can till then? Oh, no! This is just the beginning of the story of Esther. These first chapters merely set the stage for the deliverance which God intends to work in the life of the king in this kingdom, just as he wants to work a similar deliverance in your life in the kingdom of your own heart.

He is now ready to begin his intended work, and, as we go on in the story of Esther, we will discover what God, the Holy Spirit, intends to do in the life of each one of us in whom Jesus Christ has found a throne. He will expose to us the hidden plot to our lives that continually keeps us under bondage to our own selfish ways, and then he will bring us out into the glorious liberty and freedom of the sons of God.

Prayer:

Our Father, we confess to thee that as we approach this book we do so with a sense of weakness. We know thou hast hidden things here that are deep and difficult for us to grasp, and yet we sense, Lord, something of expectation and hope in what is contained in these pages. Help us to see that here is a story, if we can but see it, of that which thou art about to do in our own lives. Make us to understand and grasp it. Help us to see these principles, to clearly understand the way into the beauty and glory of the life that thou hast planned for us – here on this earth, right now! We pray in Christ’s name, Amen.

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