

## HEAVENBORN OPTIMISM

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

The Bible is full of the spirit of praise and joyousness and the true Christian re-echoes this spirit in his heart and life. God's Book is an optimistic book and God's people march to the note of victory. "O magnify thy Lord with me and let us exalt his name together," shouts the Psalmist. More often we find him on the mount of praise waving the banner of victory than in the vale of sorrow and defeat. The Bible begins with the picture of a lovely garden and ends with a beautiful city coming down from God out of heaven. All in between there is much failure and sin's dark stain. There is the ebb and flow of spiritual forces and influences, but into the darkness a heavenly light doth ever shine to break the gloom and to bring new hope to the remnant that remains. "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him" has been the cry of God's true child, not only to his own heart but in the face of those who would laugh him to scorn and sneer, "Where is thy God?" Job's mourning and humiliation were changed into rejoicing and larger exaltation. The fabled phoenix rose to new life out of its ashes, and out of the ashes and losses and crosses and suffering and even defeat as did Peter, the child of God emerges to sing a sweeter song based on a surer confidence of the ultimate triumph of righteousness over sin and the final vindication of God's children at the judgment bar, even though they may have been condemned and ostracised by the world here below.

Why can God's children always sing? Because they are children of Hope, "and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto them." If the Bible did not sweep the eternities, it could not speak with the spirit of certainty and confidence it does. Its definite declarations and predictions would have to give place to speculations and guesses. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning." Creation and redemption were no more experiments with God. Ultimate failure is not in his programme even though we see not yet all things put under him, and apparently the devil has the upper hand most anywhere we look. "But he shall reign till he has put all enemies under his feet." It is this spirit that illuminates God's word and makes its sunshine more conspicuous than its shadows; its promises more numerous than its warnings; its grace more potent than its laws—all because God is above all and through all and in all, marching on to the consummation of his eternal purposes, and who by a divine conspiracy shall make the wrath of man to praise him and the measure of wrath he shall restrain."

And it is this spirit of hope and conquest that God enthrones in the heart of that one whose will is lost in the will of God and feels that he though most insignificant, has his place in God's programme and must come to his own, though it must be through the loss of many things the natural heart holds dear, and by being reckoned a failure by the standards of material success. O the world can sing when the corn and the wine are increased. They see themselves on easy-street basking in the sunshine of human patronage and adulation. Their harp is tuned to the note of material gain and worldly honor. But poor crops, financial reverses are clouds that shut out

their sun and sorrows that change their songs of joy to misereries. The devil tells them all is lost and too often there is little in the soul to counteract his scorn. But the joy of the Christian has even centred in the fact that it spring from the heart of God and partakes of his optimism and hope. "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart," even in the darkest night of suffering, sorrow and persecution. The prison cell of Paul and Silas, in that Philippian jail, I believe was radiant with the glory of another world; there was the aroma of heaven that neutralized the foul odours of that filthy cell. The physical sufferings of those servants of God were swallowed up in the glory that was poured in. That is why Paul cries: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." You say that is future tense. But it was present tense in the Philippian jail. Where is my proof? It is in the songs of praise that broke forth from the lips and the hearts of those men, with bleeding backs. They felt more highly favored than if they had been welcomed by the mayor and given a banquet and received encomiums of praise for their benevolence and service. "When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay." The soul that is in league with the Eternal God, has fellowship with the sufferings of Christ and fills up that which is behind in those suffering. Not to make another atonement for sin, to add to the efficacy of the atonement. No! But to make operative the atonement already made, through the spirit of sacrificial, loving devotion. It was not the mere earthquake that made the Philippian jailer tremble. He had braved the dangers and the horrors of many battle fields. Those Roman soldiers were not frightened by physical dangers and foes. But it was the glory of God resting on those singing triumphant saints, when according to all that jailer had learned, they ought to have been groaning or cursing. He had never seen the like before, and had never felt the like before. His cry, "What must I do to be saved?" became the heart-cry of a new Israel raised up to bless the world not by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life. True, that is the cry of fear and despair as to the efficacy of human power to save. But it soon gives place to the song of deliverance. For God's people are a singing people; God's religion is a singing salvation. Not merely of expectation and hope, but of realization and victory. Yes, it does sing, "And in both not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." But the present tense realization breathes and exults in the song: "Now are we the sons of God." Now are we the sons of God? Yes, children in our great father's house where there is bread enough and to spare. Not slaves, not servants, but children. It gives us a holy familiarity and makes us feel at home in the company of God. The child of the cold stern judge jumps into his lap and crowds his head under the paper the judge is reading to feel the pressure of a loving arm around him, and see reflected in that face, love and tenderness and hear from his lips, "Glad to see you, my son. Hope you have had a good day at school!"

Carnal folks may sing, "This is my Father's world." But they may know nothing of that love that comes only through renewing and

sanctifying power which completely reverses our estimates of life and our standard of values and our source of joy and satisfaction. "Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not." We hear so much today about "the awful times" and the near approach of the end. My heart sings, "God is still on the throne." Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler and all other despots and dictators cannot overthrow His kingdom nor completely hinder his onward march. They may hinder for a time. You and I can disappoint God. "But he shall never fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment in the earth and the Isles shall wait for his coming." My heart sings, glory! as I write this. What a privilege to be his programme of ultimate victory by having complete victory over the world, the flesh and the devil, here and now. To have God fill all our longings, changing our crosses into crowns, our infirmities into means of grace, our weakness into strength, humbling us to the place where we feel we are less than the least of all saints, but that we "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us."

Then saints, praise the Lord! Let everything that hath breath praise Him. Keep on praise avenue. The devil cannot defeat us when we live there. That street is quarantined against doubt and grumble and repining. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," for praise is comely for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. So you may ever sing:

"In heavenly love abiding no change my heart  
can fear,  
And safe is such confiding for nothing  
changes here;  
The storms may rage without me, my heart  
may low be laid,  
But God is round about me, nor can I be dis-  
mayed.

"Wherever He may lead me, no want shall  
turn me back;  
My shepherd is beside me and nothing can I  
lack;  
His wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never  
dim;  
He knows the way He taketh and I will walk  
with Him.

"Green pastures are before me which yet I  
have not seen;  
Bright skies will soon be o'er me where  
darkest clouds have been;  
Hy hope I cannot measure, my path to life is  
free;  
My Saviour is my treasure, and He will walk  
with me."

## THE PATH OF PEACE

Do you really want it, whether God wants you to have it or not? Do you want to go or stay, even if this is outside of His will? Is your way best? Are you sure?

You remember the Israelites. Psalm 106 tells us that God "gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." There is a better thing than the request granted.

When we are wise enough and patient enough we will pray, "Thy will be done." However dismal His way may seem, it is the path of peace. The lions are chained by the side of the way and the "Celestial City" is at the other end.

—Free Methodist.

We look upon the object of our love until the very plainness with which it is endowed grows into beauty.—Mrs. S. C. Hall.