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GUEST EDITORIAL

THE PILLARS AND THE LILY WORK

Harry E. Jessop, D.D.*

"And upon the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished" (1 Kings 7:22).

King Solomon had set his heart on a tremendous task, that of building a temple for God. So wholeheartedly was he in his endeavor that he harnessed all the forces at his disposal into the work.

Into the forests of Lebanon he sent thirty thousand men. These worked in relays of ten thousand a month, so that each man had a month in the forests, then two months at home. Into the mountains he sent eighty thousand hewers and seventy thousand carriers with three thousand, three hundred foremen to superintend the work. To these were added skilled Zidonian wood cutters whom Solomon had hired from the King of Tyre.

All the work done by these men was completed part by part before being conveyed to the place of erection, "and the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (Chap. 6:7).

Of special importance were the two principal pillars for the front porch. These were entrusted to a brass worker of Tyre. Made of brass, they were given names which were of special significance, Jachin, meaning "stability" and Boaz, meaning "strength." "And upon the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished."

Now it is evident that those pillars would have been just as strong had they not been finished, but they would not have been nearly so attractive. The lily work was needed to complete them.

That Old Testament temple, while of course, an actual building, stands as a long acknowledged type of spiritual fact, an edifice composed of blood-washed believers which is not yet complete, but is silently in progress. Paul put on record that truth when he wrote: "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom also ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22). Peter supplemented it as he declared: "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5).

In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul told the story of a visit to Jerusalem where he met "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be

pillars" (Gal. 2:9). While in His post-ascension message to the churches, the risen Lord declared through John on the Patmos Island: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev. 3:12).

The story has been persistently circulated that, throughout world Jewry, the temple yet to be reared in Jerusalem by the restored nation is already in existence in its essential parts. Patriotic Jews, says the report, are at work all over the world making the necessary preparations. One day the word will be given and from under cover in many lands will be brought whatever is needed to furnish the final temple of the Lord.

While we have no doubt whatever concerning the ultimate restoration of the temple and its worship—for it is to be as Jews, not as Christians that Israel will return to their own land—we have grave doubts as to whether such a story could be anything more than legendary and fantastic, the pious wishful thinking of imaginative minds. There is one thing, however, concerning which we have no doubt whatsoever, God Himself is at work in every part of the world shaping material for His spiritual temple so that at a given moment when the divine Word shall go forth for its completion, every part shall come readily to its place,

As we come more closely to our text, two thoughts suggest themselves.

1. The Figure before us—and its two-fold spiritual suggestiveness.

The pillar engraved with the lily work.

1. The pillar.

The names given these pillars are not without significance for they suggest the essential characteristics of all who would do effective service for God.

Boaz, meaning Strength, that power which is able to get things done.

Jachin, meaning Stability, that quality which is granite-like when things and people oppose—a "won't-move-for-anything" disposition. And yet, it is not the stubbornness of carnality; it is the strength and endurance of spirituality.

A pillar! Sometimes it is easier to be a pillow—an easy, good natured individual agreeing with everybody, but standing with nobody. Such people are never vital and leave no lasting results.

There are many scriptural exhortations to this pillar experience:

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine . . ." (Eph. 4:14).

"That ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17).

"That God of all grace . . . stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

It is with all this in view that your Lord challenges you to the sturdiest life He can

develop in you, saying deep down within your soul as He did to Peter: "Thou art a rock man and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Here, then, is a robust spirituality, so energized with divine power that it will stand when the odds are against it and do things for God where others would shrink, crumble and wilt.

The church has been blessed with many such men, who have become classic in their example. Outstanding among them was Paul, the man with missionary enthusiasm, dogged in his determination; Luther, the fearless reformer, bold in his aggression; Wesley, the Methodist founder, untiring in his evangelism; William Booth, the friend of the outcast masses, undying in his passion.

In this day of lax convictions, shallow spirituality and weak-kneed testimony, there is need of a positive revival of that old-time ruggedness which is ready to die rather than flinch. We need pillars in the house of God who will go out no more forever.

2. The lily work.

Having said all that, it now becomes necessary to say this: a pillar may be exceedingly strong and yet be unadorned and consequently unattractive. The stronger the pillar the greater the need for the lily work. Happy the man who has not only the Spirit's gifts but His graces, too.

(1) This lily work is of God's personal designing.

The pattern is not difficult to find; it is clearly set forth in the Word of God. Take, for instance those two familiar portions given us by the Apostle Paul:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . ." (Gal. 5:22-23).

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

What is all this? Lily work! Spiritual adornment! Oh! I know there is a tendency in some places even within the church itself—to regard this lily work as a mark of weakness, but let it ever be remembered that He without whom there could have been no church at all, declared Himself to be "meek and lowly in heart." Matt. 11:29.

(2) This lily work is of God's personal tracing.

It is something which He personally puts in and upon the soul.

We have seen some who have tried to imi-

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