

HIRAM THE KING
AND
HIRAM THE ARTIFICER

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HIRAM THE KING AND HIRAM THE ARTIFICER

SOME four years ago it was my privilege to read to the Men's League a paper entitled "The Building of The Temple." Our study was based upon the teachings contained in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg,

"That the Sacred Scriptures of the Bible are a Divine Revelation of Truth concerning Man as a spiritual being" (p. 2).

and,

"that Housebuilding in the Scriptures is freely used as the means of instruction concerning Character-building; the creation of the soul; the recognition and the development of its several parts; the furnishing of the soul with those qualities and principles, those beauties and virtues, those habits and exercises that will enable a man to discharge his highest service to the Lord and his fellow men, and to find the choicest satisfaction and delight in the pursuit of his immortal career.

And the details concerning the Temple built by Solomon preserve for us the Divine Plan of the structure of the human soul, a specification of the materials to be obtained for its true formation, directions as to the right use of the supreme faculties of the soul, a catalogue of the requirements for the worship of the Lord in a life of service to men, and instruction as to the consecration of the soul to the end for which it has been created" (pp. 4, 5).

This outline manifestly opens up matters of psychological, philosophical and religious character in a quite practical way. The structure of the Temple informs us concerning the several degrees of the soul; the specification of the materials required instructs us concerning the subjects and kinds of knowledge we need in order to build up and equip a worthy character. The various uses of the two divisions of the Temple and the courts around

it instruct us concerning the several degrees or planes of our consciousness; and the requirements for worship—the Table of Shew-bread, the Golden Candle-stick, the Laver of Brass, the Altar of Incense and the Altar of Burnt Sacrifice—represent the several principles and practices that a devout man will observe regularly. Self-dedication to the Lord; lighting the lamp of Divine Truth; simple prayer; as well as self-consecration by regular and consistent acts of devotion, should be the fixed and revered features of a true man, a living Temple. For we agree with the Apostle Paul where he writes: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. iii, 16, 17).

You will please forgive my thus briefly recapitulating what I am sure you all know quite well, but I have done so that our minds may be refreshed and brought into harmony of thought; and that we may be helped to realise the importance of the particular details relative to the materials—the subjects, the knowledge, the learning—and the arts and crafts that are necessary to the full equipment of the soul, and the enjoyment of the highest exercises and experiences that are known to men.

Now, the first fact to be noted is that Solomon, the wise King of Israel, had to obtain both material and labour from an adjoining country. The land of Israel itself did not contain the necessary woods and stones. The men of Israel themselves had neither the skill nor the experience wherewith to provide for the building of the Temple.

Affirming that the Land or Kingdom of Israel represents the spiritual, the Kingdom of Heaven, within man, and Solomon the wisdom that rules in that spiritual kingdom, we are thus taught that the spiritual of itself has neither material nor power to build up a true character. No one can attain to true manhood who dwells only in and upon that which the spiritual provides. It is necessary to gain the help and support of that which is natural, substantial, practical. High thoughts, devout prayers, holy aspirations, exalted emotions, pure feelings, are all very beautiful and are essentially necessary; but they must

find expression in concrete form; they must have an actual, factual basis; they must be embodied in fitting habit of speech and action: and this calls for the introduction and use of materials of a natural order; it involves the bringing into the service of the spiritual, Israel, that which the outer natural world can supply. This is indicated for us by the service that, according to our Scripture, Hiram, King of Tyre, performed for Solomon, King of Israel; and the friendly and mutually beneficial intercourse of the two kings represents for us what is so desirable—the united and reciprocal labours of the spiritual and the natural to build up a true manhood and make man a worthy Temple of the Living God. And so the Scriptures that inform us of the intercourse of Solomon with the two Hiram, of the Israelitish King with the Phœnicians, are highly instructive, teaching us how to use the natural world and its special treasures in the service of the spiritual, and how the natural in return receives from the spiritual that which immensely enriches and blesses the natural.

Before we proceed further, however, allow me to say that I shall ask you to confine your attention to that which is written in the First Book of Kings. There are certain particulars recorded also in the Second Book of Chronicles, and the attempt to harmonise the records is not easy; indeed, no one, so far as I can ascertain, has been successful in so doing. Our New-Church doctrines and principles teach that the narrative of the First Book of Kings has been written under Divine Inspiration, with the sole purpose of providing a parable or allegory that will express exactly the spiritual or eternal truth. Such facts have been used and arranged in such order that the narrative presents a perfect parable, a story that corresponds precisely to the inner meaning. We have reason to believe that is not so with respect to the Chronicles version, which has been written either as a piece of history—as the title “The Chronicles” suggests—or as an allegory by some literary person. But in either case you will agree that, if the purpose of the narrative in the First Book of Kings be to present spiritual instruction, we must carefully adhere to that narrative and not allow any

diversion from it or modification of it because of what may be written elsewhere.

Keeping, therefore, to the First Book of Kings, we have four passages as the data for our study, three relative to Hiram the King (v, 1-18; ix, 10-14, 26-28; x, 11-22) and one to Hiram the Artificer (vii, 13-50). First, as to Hiram the King, we read:

“And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David” (1 Kings v, 1).

Solomon responded by asking Hiram to co-operate with him in building the Temple that David had first thought to build, and he asked Hiram to command his servants to hew cedar trees out of Lebanon along with Solomon's servants, and Solomon paid tribute to the skill of the Sidonians in hewing timber. Hiram rejoiced greatly to hear of Solomon's project, and at once promised to do all that Solomon desired; he said as many cedar trees and as many fir trees as Solomon wanted should be hewn down and sent “by sea in floats” to wheresoever Solomon wished; and in return Solomon was to provide Hiram and his household with twenty thousand measures of wheat and twenty measures of pure oil, year by year. A league was made between the two kings, and from Israel a levy was sent up to Lebanon every month to work for a month with Hiram's men and return home for two months before returning to Lebanon. And in addition to that the quarries of the king of Tyre were requisitioned and Solomon's men with Hiram's men hewed stones which were shaped and prepared at the quarries and sent ready to be placed in position in the Temple.

This mention of the stone-quarrying is very brief, but is interesting. The Authorised Version reads:

“And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.”

The Revised Version reads:

“And Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders and the Gebalites did fashion them and prepared the timber and stones to build the house.”

The stone-squarers of the Authorised Version and the Gebalites of the Revised Version are the same. They were men of Gebal, or, to use the Hebrew word, they were Giblim. They are spoken of also in Psalm lxxxiii, 7, and in Ezekiel xxvii, 9, where they are described as *calveri*, men who were skilled in caulking ships—stopping up chinks and preserving the boards from decaying and breaking. These men of Gebal were under Hiram’s control; they were Phœnicians, allied with the men of Tyre and Sidon; but they were able to render invaluable service to Solomon along with the wood-workers in the building of the Temple. And the lesson we are thus taught is that the Ideal Character, the Temple of the Living God, can only be formed and built up by the combined and co-operative labours of the spiritual and the natural, Solomon and Hiram, and the joint and mutual labour of all they control.

Now, timbers and stones have quite distinctive correspondences or meanings; they signify the different kinds of good and truth that have to be skilfully obtained and prepared and made worthy and fit for use in a noble manhood. Solomon and Hiram represent the ruling faculties of the spiritual mind and the natural mind respectively; their servants and subordinates represent all their subservient powers and abilities; and the wood and stones that the natural, Hiram, can bring to the building of the Temple represent all the various knowledges and experiences, all the arts and sciences, that the natural commands and can contribute to that great purpose. The name Hiram means noble; indicating that there is no more noble end or purpose that the natural man can pursue than to establish friendly relations with the spiritual and to yield his best and richest treasures for service to the spiritual in the building of the Temple in the land of Israel.

In these days we hear much about the conflict between the spiritual and the natural. The natural seeks to pre-

dominate; the spiritual is despised. The natural would suppress the spiritual or make it contribute to the aggrandisement and extension of the natural. The natural is disposed rather to ignore, if not to destroy, the Temple of a true and ideal humanity. This story teaches that spiritual and natural should be friends and that the noble purpose of the natural is to recognise and help to support and make perfect Man as a Temple of the Living God; which cannot be achieved without the aid of the natural.

But please be very careful to note that the giving and the service are not all on the part of the natural. Abundance of timbers and stones year by year was contributed by Hiram. What did he get in return? According to verse 9 of our chapter, Hiram stipulated for "food for my household," a most significant request; and in verse 11 we read that "Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: this gave Solomon to Hiram year by year." You see: the spiritual supplies the natural with the most vital necessities of life, the very substances without which the natural must suffer and perish, wheat and oil—the bread of life that satisfies and nourishes; the precious oil that scents and sustains, that yields light and lubrication. Bread and oil—these are the return gifts that Solomon provides for Hiram; teaching, clearly, that the natural man depends upon the spiritual far more vitally, inwardly, essentially, than does the spiritual depend upon the natural, even though a great deal more fuss and noise and labour are involved in obtaining what the natural may provide.

What does the natural man become if he takes not his daily bread? How starved, weak and inefficient he becomes if he fails to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread"! And how stiff and creaky, how rusty and stubborn, the natural becomes if the oil of love does not find its way into the various joints and contacts, the wheels and cranks that are involved in the mechanism of our daily life! Wheat and oil—they come from Israel, they are provided in abundance by the spiritual man, and they make the people of Tyre and Sidon and Gebal healthy and happy, strong and active, in their ordinary

everyday life. The wheat and the oil are supplied in return for the woods and the stones. The friendly reunion and co-operation of Solomon and Hiram to build the Temple of the Living God result in their mutual and reciprocal prosperity, their healthy, happy progress. Each gives of what it has; each receives of what the other has.

And I suggest that that is a most important and impressive truth, of which a great many people are ignorant or to which they are indifferent, in these days.

The natural is regarded as self-sufficient; there is not the earnest desire to advance the purposes of the spiritual; to help establish devotion, prayer, enlightenment, sacrifice as the central predominant features of the land; as the Temple actually became the predominant feature of the Holy Land. There is little realisation that the natural can only be orderly and strong and peaceful when it receives "wheat and oil" from the spiritual. Yet the teaching is plain, convincing, impressive—Solomon and Hiram must work in the closest and the most friendly combination.

Passing next to the second passage (1 Kings ix, 10-14, 26-28), we find it is recorded that this intercourse and co-operation continued for twenty years, at the end of which time Solomon had built two houses, "the house of the LORD, and the king's house." And it is stated that "Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold according to all his desire." We then come to a remarkable but most instructive incident:

"Then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day. And Hiram sent to the king six score talents of gold."

In the margin of the Authorised Version the meaning of the word "Cabul" is given as "displeasing or dirty"—the Hebrew word means displeasing or displeasure; while the Revised Version margin offers the translation "they were

called the land of Cabul," thus not attributing to Hiram the expression that the cities Solomon gave to him were displeasing or disappointing. It is both interesting and amusing to read what the commentators have to say about this verse, for in comparing or contrasting it with certain statements in the Second Book of Chronicles they allege that Solomon was crafty and mean, and handed over to Hiram in payment of a debt a region that was poor and barren and of little value "to a maritime nation"; and it is imagined that Hiram was discontented and disgusted and eventually returned the cities to Solomon. Historically the whole matter is obscure and leaves all the scholars guessing. Let us, however, adhere to our principle that that which is written in the Book of Kings is written as a parable to instruct us concerning the right relationships that should exist between the spiritual and the natural in the building of the Temple of true manhood and the life that should follow.

Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in Galilee, the northern region of the Holy Land; which means that the natural is to share in the government of the land, to rule over Galilee, the more external sphere or degree of life. Cities in Scripture always correspond to doctrines, organised teachings, formulated and arranged systems of thought; and these doctrines Solomon, the wisdom of the spiritual man, always provides for the natural. But such doctrines are at first disappointing to the natural man; they are found to be less attractive, less wealthy, less splendid than the natural man expected. I think that is invariably the case. Our first natural hopes and expectations are that the doctrines of the spiritual man shall be so grand, so well established, so powerful that the natural man shall be great, shall enjoy the best of everything, live in affluence and luxury. And it is a little disappointing at first, when it is realised that simplicity, humility and modesty are characteristic of our new acquisition. There is to be nothing of outward show, worldly pomp, material grandeur about that which the spiritual man provides for the natural man. At first the natural man is not pleased; he is perhaps a little disgruntled; he does not get just what he anti-

pated. He looks critically at the gift. Said Hiram, "What cities are these which thou hast given me?" But note carefully the words and action of Hiram that follow immediately. He quietly suppressed his discontent; he called Solomon his "brother," and he sent a splendid present of six score talents of gold to Solomon. And that obviously portrays the right and high-minded course to take—to realise that our natural expectations are unreasonable, to accept in a true spirit of charity or brotherhood what the spiritual provides. By the present of six score talents of gold is indicated that ample and complete obedience, the gold of obedience, that makes one a loyal and joyous receiver of the doctrines that are given by Solomon, revealed to us by the great wise King.

Further meditation on this passage, just as it stands in the ninth chapter of the First Book of Kings, will, I am sure, afford further and delightful instruction, which will enable one to enter into the meaning of these later statements in this chapter, that

"Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon" (1 Kings ix, 26-28).

and again,

"And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of alnug trees, and precious stones" (1 Kings x, 11).

and once again,

"For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom" (1 Kings x, 22-23).

All which confirms the truth that, when there is co-operation, unity, brotherhood between the spiritual and the natural in building the Temple of the Living

God, great blessings are enjoyed by both; all the world—all the many treasures and pleasures of the world, all the wealth of nature and of art, of human discovery, invention and achievement—may be enjoyed in richest and amplest measure. Whereas, if there be disunity, lack of co-operation of Solomon and Hiram—spiritual and natural—neither can prosper, neither can attain to the true heights of power and wisdom, neither can serve the Lord or mankind.

So far we have paid attention only to Hiram the King; a few words concerning Hiram the Artificer may be desirable to complete our study. In the First Book of Kings we read of him only in the eighth chapter, though, as in the case of Hiram the King, the Second Book of Chronicles has other and additional references to him; but just now we keep strictly to the narrative of Kings. Here we are told that

“king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow’s son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work” (1 Kings vii, 13-14).

and after learning of the Pillars of Brass, the Molten Sea, the Ten Lavers, and all their appurtenances, we read:

“all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, were of bright [or burnished] brass” (verse 45).

Now the first observation to make is that the most skilful workman that could be found was employed on this detailed work, and that “he was filled with wisdom and understanding and cunning [or skill] to work all works in brass.”

It is wise always to employ the best workmanship, the most worthy characteristics, the specialist, and to dedicate the best to be obtained for the making of man as the Temple of the Living God. And this best, Hiram the artificer, is described as a son of a Tyrian man and an

Israelitish woman of the tribe of Naphtali. The best work is done by him who has a full and complete knowledge of natural things, a man born of a Tyrian father, but who has an affection or love of spiritual good, a man born of an Israelitish mother.

When our intellectual faculties or abilities have a true and holy spirit within them, when our natural art and skill are allied with spiritual aspiration or desire, then we get the choicest results; the work in brass, or rather copper—the metal that corresponds to our actual, factual life, our habits, rites, ceremonies and practices of devotion, worship and consecration—the work in brass is made beautiful and chaste, as the descriptions of all the objects, vessels and utensils made by Hiram the artificer indicate. Again we remind ourselves that the name Hiram means noble, telling us that it is only by the use of that which is noble, that which is wise, experienced and skilful that the Temple can be fittingly and beautifully equipped and adorned. And telling us also that the highest and greatest work to which our noble faculties and powers can be devoted is that of building the Temple of the Soul, from which the natural man in all its varieties and branches may receive the richest blessings.

