Articles by George Mair

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The Believer's Love Book (September–October 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, September–October 1971.

Editor's note: Dr. George Muir, Specialist in General Surgery at Toronto, Canada, directs our attention in these new articles to values greater than that of wealth or health. There will be three articles in this series by this "beloved physician." Be sure to read them all.

Part I

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (S. of Sol. 1:1-2). The Song of Solomon is obviously a love story and being an Eastern love story some parts of it are so direct that they almost offend our Western sensitivities. Many have wondered why it was ever included in the Bible, and the question has been raised, "Is it inspired?"

We need have no doubt as to its inspiration. The Old Testament was completed some hundreds of years before Christ came into the world, and its writings were brought together in one book, some think by Ezra in the "Great Synagogue," four hundred years before our Saviour's birth. The Old Testament we have is the same Book the Lord had, the Book He loved, read and quoted; the Book He called "Scripture." And we can be certain that He read the Song of Solomon.

What Is Its Message?

Through the ages, and even today, the rabbis have viewed the Song of Solomon as showing the love

between Jehovah and Israel. In fact, this is a common theme in the Old Testament - Jehovah the husband of Israel. For instance, Isaiah 62:5 reads: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." And in Jeremiah 2:2 it is recorded: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." However, the book that really deals with this theme is Hosea, and this is why God referred to Israel's idolatry as adultery. In Hosea 2:2 it is revealed that He divorces her for a time, when He says: "Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not My wife, neither am I her husband," but in verse 14, 15 and 19 He says: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness . . . I will give her vineyards there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope . . . and I will betroth thee unto Me forever."

In our day, it is all a picture of the Lord and His bride - the Church.

What Is Its Story?

The Song of Solomon is a series of poems and, as you might imagine, it is not always easy to discern a story in poems. Yet there must be a story in it.

Some time ago a German scholar named Ewald suggested that the Shulamite had fallen in love with a shepherd, but that Solomon saw her and tried to win her. However, she was true to her lover and finally he had to let her go. It is to be wondered if Ewald, who has been called the "father of higher criticism," ever had the spiritual insight to understand such a devotional book. Also, this would make Solomon a villain, yet so often,

especially in the Psalms, he is a type of Christ in His millennial splendor. It just isn't like Scripture to mix such illustrations.

The story goes like this:

Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon and leased it to keepers (S. of Sol. 8:11). Baal-hamon is north of Jerusalem in Ephraim. The family seems to have consisted of a mother, sons, and perhaps two daughters. Since the father is not mentioned, the mother may have been a widow, and as the word "children" should be translated sons (1:6), they may have been the Shulamite's stepbrothers, for they were obviously unkind to her. They made her look after the lambs and kids as well as the vineyard (1:6-8), and she was evidently out in all kinds of weather, for she says: "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me" (1:6). She had neglected her appearance because she never had time, saying: "My own vineyard have I not kept" (1:6).

Solomon said that there was nothing new under the sun, and how right he was, for here we have a Bible "Cinderella story."

To continue the story, one day a stranger came along. It was Solomon, perhaps inspecting his vineyards [?] incognito, and surely it is to him she speaks in verse 6. They fall in love, and when he goes away again he doesn't tell her who he is or where he's going. She thinks he's a shepherd, and asks: "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon ...?" (1:7), but he doesn't tell her and asks her to trust him and wait (1:8).

In the subsequent chapters they meet from time to time and enjoy each other's company. He promises one day to come and make her his bride. No doubt she told all of this to her family and the country people, only to become the object of their laughter.

Don't people laugh at us when we tell them that the Lord is coming back again? Peter reminds us that there will be scoffers, saying: "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4).

Then one day he came to claim his bride. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness . . . Behold his bed (travelling litter or bridal car [?], this obviously being a military procession), which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel . . . Go forth O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the days of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (3:6-11).

Indeed, this is the greatest story of all time, and I like the surprise and joy of the Shulamite on that day and the happiness of Solomon. We readily think of the fact that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. One day He will present His bride before a wondering world and universe.

What Does It Teach?

At the Lord's Supper we often use the Song of Solomon to express the Church's appreciation of the Saviour: "My

beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (5:10), but the book also tells us what the Lord thinks of the Church and what He'd really like the Church to be [?].

In Solomon's sevenfold description of the Shulamite, we also see the Church.

Eyes. "Thou hast doves' eyes" (4:1). The dove was the bird of innocence and sacrifice; its eyes are gentle, submissive, and pure. When he [?] released the dove from the ark it returned because it would not, unlike the raven, live on dead bodies, of which there would have been plenty. Do we feed on the filth all around us in the world today, or have we eyes only for what is wholesome?

Hair. "Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead" (4:1). These goats were Syrian goats with beautiful long black, soft, silky hair. A woman's hair is her glory and she (who represents the Church) covers it in the presence of her husband (who represents Christ). Do we hold that which is our glory (e.g., wealth, skill, even beauty) subject to His will and available for His use?

Teeth. "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing, of which every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them" (4:2). The Shulamite's teeth were white and even, twins speaking of the two sets, and there were no gaps for none were barren. Teeth are for chewing, and the Lord sees His Church as a body of people in an indifferent world who feed upon His Word and are eblflf Testlr [?].

Lips. "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely" (4:3). Scarlet, like Rahab's scarlet cord, would speak of blood, suggesting salvation. The Church's speech is comely when it speaks of Christ and His salvation.

Mind. "Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks" (4:3). Pomegranates speak of fruitfulness, and our thoughts are fruitful when they dwell on Christ and work for Him.

Neck. "Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, on which there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men" (4:4). How strange to describe a woman's neck like this! The Shulamite could hold her head high; she had done nothing to be ashamed of. Can we do the same? Certainly we need not fear judgment, but will we have cause to be ashamed at His coming [?]?

Love. "Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies" (4:5). When the Lord looks on this scene He sees a group of people who love Him, and this, midst a world that hates Him and blasphemes His holy Name.

And so the Bridegroom says in 4:7: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." Here, He is speaking of our position before Him in grace, yet don't you feel that we are given this description as a standard to aim in our daily conduct and conversation?

Song of Solomon, Part II (November–December 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, November–December 1971.

Editor's note: Dr. George Mair, a busy surgeon at Toronto, Canada, makes time to study the Bible. Here, in his second article of this series on The Song of Solomon, he gives us the results of his diligence and research.

We have now considered the Song of Solomon in a general way and have seen that it symbolizes the love between the Lord and His Church. Now we must look at several incidents to learn a few practical lessons that this book has for us in this present Church age. In chapter 2 the Holy Spirit unfolds to us in a very beautiful way the mysteries of -

Communion

In this conversation between Solomon and the Shulamite we get a picture of the relationship between the Lord and His Church, or perhaps on this occasion, instead of the Church in general, it would be better to consider things in the light of the individual believer. Let us think, then, of

The Persons. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (2:1). Contrary to what is generally thought, the bride was describing herself as a very common person, for the rose of Sharon was the common red flower that grew in profusion after the rain. It was either the anemone or narcissus and in spring they cover the entire landscape. She was also describing herself as a shy, retiring person, for the lily of the valleys hides in

the shade. Humanly speaking, Christians in general are also insignificant. Did not Paul say in I Corinthians 1:26 "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"? We usually see very plainly each other's insignificance and imperfections. But in Song of Solomon 2:2 the Lord replied, "As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." Thorns speak of the curse - the mass of unsaved mankind - and to the Lord the Christian stands out from among them in flawless beauty because of redemption.

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" (2:3-4). This is how the bride sees the Lord - as a fruit tree, capable of providing

Protection. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight .." This is a common picture of redemption and security in Scripture. "And a man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; like rivers of water in a dry place, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa 32:2). The easterner must have appreciated the shade of a tree in the blistering sun.

Food and sustainance. "And His fruit was sweet to my taste."

Happiness. She has to change the metaphor here to express the fulness of her joy. "He brought me to the banqueting house."

Appreciation. As the bride sits in contemplation, we have the Lord's reaction in verse 7, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of

the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till it please." The pronoun "it" is feminine, so should read "she." The Lord appreciates the Church's communion and worship, and He is not going to be the One to cut it short. How like the experience of Mary and Martha, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

Privilege. "O My dove, who art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (2:14). Here, the Lord describes the Church with respect to her: (1) character - "O My dove," (2) security - "who art in the cleft of the rocks," and (3) access - "in the secret places of the stairs."

There are times when the Lord's ear is open to the cry of the unsaved, especially when they cry for help, but as He looks on this world it is His Church that has the privilege of access to Him. In fact, it is only the Church that sincerely approaches Him, and that the Lord delights to hear is indicated by His words, "let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice." We have to be close to Him in order that He may see our countenance. And do we not often speak to Him from afar - in mere ritual - because something has come between, and so He says, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes" (2:15)? The Shulamite would often have had to deal with these animals in the vineyard, so the Lord speaks in language she would readily understand, and we all know the things in our own lives that come between. Whatever they are, be it work, or money, or position, the Lord says to put them in their place or get rid of them.

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether" (2:17).

Fruitfulness

In Song of Solomon 4:12-16, we are given an idea of the Church's usefulness (and of the individual believer's usefulness) to the Lord, and also in the world. "A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (4:12). These words, along with those that follow, tell us of the Lord's appreciation. However, it's difficult to understand why He has any appreciation at all for us because we are so imperfect in our practice, and we so often fail Him.

Throughout the book we find the Lord in His garden, but here in the details of the garden we have the principles that govern the Church.

Separation. "A garden enclosed (4:12). In the east a garden was always protected by a wall, for without were robbers, dogs, and wild animals which would soon plunder and destroy it. The delight that easterners had for such a place is seen in the fact that our word paradise comes from the Persian word for garden. In a wild lawless world full of the thorns and thistles of sin, the Church is the Lord's garden. In its visible form it has to be protected - there must be a wall - or else the world will come in and destroy it. In the collective Church we have seen the wolves in sheep's clothing come in, not sparing the flock, when the wall was broken down, and now many that are called churches are just empty shells with nothing there for the Lord. In our individual lives we have to keep out the world's principles and practices, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," - Of

course, we have only to separate from the world's influence, and not from its need, else we could easily become like the Pharisees, who said of the Lord, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Activation. "A spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (4:12). Water was very precious (and is today) in the east and a garden needed it if it was to bring forth fruit. In the Scripture water often speaks of the Holy Spirit, and as water is important for producing fruit, so the Holy Spirit is essential in the believer's life for producing fruit also. The Holy Spirit is the power.

Fructification. "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, henna, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices" (4:13-14). The purpose of the Lord's garden is both to produce fruit and to produce fragrance. Even apart from the fruit, the Lord receives pleasure from our life for Him, from our worship, and from our prayers (see Rev. 5:8).

Propagation. "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (4:15). This garden did not just have a well of water for its own use; streams from Lebanon flowed from it. Water would enter the ground from the melting snows on Mount Lebanon and would surface as a spring in this garden and then flow from it to benefit those around. The wall kept out any harm, but it didn't keep the benefit in. How like the Church - a wall to keep the world out, yet the Holy Spirit working from within our local churches, and from within our individual lives, to reach and benefit those around

us. The world sadly needs this living water. Do we keep it to ourselves?

Stimulation. "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out" (4:16). "Awake, O north wind." What a strange statement! The south wind with its gentle warmth we can understand, but what garden needs the north wind? Yet God has given our northern gardens winter as well as summer, and as someone has asked, "Have you ever seen a delicious MacIntosh apple grow on a tropical island?" It needs the cold hard Canadian winter to achieve its perfection. Or if we think of fragrance, some plants give off their perfume in the sun, some smell fresh after the rain, some, like the night-scented stock we had in Britain, exude their fragrance as the darkness settles down, some, like the tomato plant give their scent when squeezed and bruised, while frankincense gives its scent when it is burned.

How practical a lesson we can learn in this love story! God doesn't need hothouse Christians. He allows trial to come into our lives that we may mature, that we may be more useful, that we may draw closer to Him, and that there may ascend from our lives, in all their circumstances, a fragrance. God did not permit honey in the meal offering - natural sweetness destroyed by fire. He asked for frankincense which gave off its sweetness even more in the fire, and so spoke of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians should try to be like that. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love ..." (I Pet. 1:7-8).

Intercession

"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" (S. of Sol. 8:8).

The bride now has her position secure with the bridegroom, but her mind now turns to her immature little sister. Whether she was just young or permanently immature is difficult to determine, but surely the application is that we should be concerned about those who have no love for Christ and thus are not saved. We should speak to the Lord about them. Notice how He seemed to be just waiting to hear about this. Immediately He says, "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar" (8:9).

These people we are concerned about may not be saved, but there is something we can work on. If only a wall it can be developed into a palace. If they are our friends, we do have their ear and we can witness to them by our life and conversation, and especially with our Lord's help they may come to accept Christ as their Saviour.

In the first part, then, in our special relationship we see "we have the secret of the stairs" - we have access to Him, and in the second part we see our usefulness. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse," but let us not forget that "we have a little sister" who needs our prayers and our help.

Song of Solomon (January–February 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, January–February 1972.

Editor's note: This is the last of Dr. Mair's short series on the Song of Solomon. We hope to have other articles by the Doctor sometime during this year.

In our past articles we have thought of the story of this Old Testament "Love Book" in a general way, and we have learned from it various lessons centering upon our special relationship with the Lord. Presently, we would like to ponder the incident of backsliding, its prevention, and the Lord's return.

The Problem of Backsliding

In chapter five we find that it is late at night. The Shulamite is asleep when her beloved comes and says in verse two, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night." But she has made up her mind to sleep and she would not change her plans. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" (v. 3). Since the easterner wore sandals, they had to wash their feet every night. She would not let him in, so he put his hand through the hole in the door to the latch which was on the inside of the door only, and he smeared the latch with perfumed ointment. This was a lover's way of leaving word that he had been there, and this is why the Shulamite's fingers dripped with sweet-smelling myrrh when she eventually opened the door. But her beloved had left and the

Shulamite, conscience stricken, went out into the night to look for him. This was a rash thing to do, as no respectable girl would be in the streets alone at that time of the night. The watchman assumed she was a harlot, and as a result abused her and took her veil away, for harlots did not wear veils, the veil being a sign of modesty and virtue. As she searches, she remembers he will be in his garden and she finds him there.

It is surprising that the Shulamite could grow cold like that, but we can easily understand the lesson that it teaches us. It followed a period of deep communion and a reaction had set in. Immediately after spiritual success is always a dangerous time, and we can readily become proud and self-sufficient. We pray when we are afraid and unhappy, but how often do we pray when everything is going well? Remember, it was immediately after the Lord's baptism and His public endorsement from Heaven that Satan tempted Him, but he found no weakness in Him.

How often, too, are we smugly satisfied with our ease, security, and sanctified position (washed feet) while the Lord is out in the night working. So we get out of touch with the Lord and we become indifferent and vulnerable. That's when we get ourselves in trouble and our testimony is spoiled, like the Shulamite losing her veil. When we take our eyes off the Lord, we succumb to the temptation, some angry word, or a fit of temper. It was when Peter took his eyes off the Lord that he began to sink beneath the waves.

Yet, no sooner did the Shulamite begin to think about her beloved (see v. 10) than she knew where to find him, for he was just waiting for her to return to him.

In chapters six and seven, so full of beautiful eastern imagery, the Lord has much to say about His bride. Some of the imagery we have already thought about, and some is strange to apply to the Shulamite, yet it intrigues us as it is applied to the Church, or to Israel. "Who is she who looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (6:10)? We think of the saved as being few, but when we see the whole Church assembled, I believe it will be a stupendous sight. In 6:13 we read, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." Both Israel (Judah and Ephraim) and the Church (Jew and Gentile) have two component parts. Some of the imagery has been used in connection with the gospel, such as in 7:1, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" (See Isa. 52:7; Nah. 1:15; Rom. 10:15), especially when we think of feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and there is talk of fields, villages and vineyards.

The Prevention of Backsliding

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death ..." (8:6). Here we have the remedy for backsliding, or even temporarily getting away from the Lord, and that is, a constant appreciation of Him. That will be a seal on our heart (emotions) and our arm (actions). "We love Him because He first loved us," and the more we consider Him and His love for us, the more our love for Him will grow. And so He says, ". . for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as sheol; its coals are coals of fire, which have a most vehement

flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be rejected." These beautiful words may even be true of our imperfect love, but surely they find their vindication only in His perfect love. What a glorious analysis of His love!

The strength of His love. "Love is strong as death." It was this that brought us to the Lord in the first place (see Rom. 5:7-11). Does it not warm our hearts to think of this fact? I am often in wonder at the Lord's wisdom in instituting the Remembrance Feast. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows how easily we could become so involved in the daily affairs of life that we would cool off and drift away, so He brings us back every Lord's Day to remember His death. How often our hearts warm within us there as we are refreshed and renewed. In fact, this service has a special attraction for believers, and it is usually the very last one that a backslider ceases to attend.

The jealousy of His love. When we think of human jealousy, it is often selfish and mean, yet pure love is necessarily jealous - even divine love. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Peter could say, "Whom, having not seen, ye love" (I Pet. 1:8), but he could also say, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel" (I Pet. 4:17). And as Hebrews 12:6 states, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Yes, it's wonderful to be a Christian, but it's also a serious thing to have the Lord so interested in us as one of His own. We just simply cannot live as we

please. This would not be good for us, nor would it be pleasing to Him. How many Christians have found that when they have tried to do this, the Lord has His ways of bringing us back! It's hard to kick against the goads.

The endurance of His love. "Many waters cannot quench love." Here I'm not thinking of the waves and billows of God's wrath going over Christ, but of all the troubles and disappointments I cause Him, yet it does not diminish His love one bit. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" - He loved them through everything. He loved them in spite of Peter's denying, Thomas' doubting, all the disciples forsaking, and in spite of their lack of loving, believing and understanding. How comforting to know that in spite of much stumbling, failing, and sinning on our part, our God delights in mercy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

The value of His love. As we look back we see the value of this love, for we "were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ" (I Pet. 1:18-19). As we look back we see what He has done for us, and it cannot be bought, although Christendom can neither see nor accept this fact. As to the future we look forward and upward, and see what our Lord will do for us, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). Little wonder that the Holy Spirit says in Song of Solomon 8:7, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be rejected." We cannot buy such love, yet the wonder is that we do not respond to it more with our love, our time, our strength,

and our material possessions. If we allowed this love to fill our hearts we would be more inclined to say with Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:7, 10-11).

The Promise of Christ's Return

I often think of the Shulamite in her Cinderella-like existence at Baal-hamon. The work was hard and not really suited for a girl. How she must have looked forward to visits with her beloved, and especially how she must have looked forward to the time when he would fulfill his promise and come to take her away to be his bride! What a glorious and exciting day it shall be when Christ shall come for His Bride, the Church! Christendom has either forgotten or no longer cares, but from the very beginning we have been a waiting people, even as Paul told the Thessalonians, " . . . ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:9-10). We do not even belong here, "For our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Of course, in these days of religious freedom and relative affluence many of us are quite content with our present lot and are in no hurry to leave. Yet the days are evil, the mystery of iniquity already works, and it is increasing in spite of man's technological brilliance. Sin is eating like a cancer at the whole foundation of our

society. Many are worried and afraid of the things that are coming on the earth. How comforting to rest on the Lord's promise, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

It is uncertain whether the words of Song of Solomon 2:10-13 were spoken to the Shulamite by her beloved on some visit, or when he came to claim her, but surely these are the words of Christ Himself to His Bride, when He shall come for her, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give forth fragrance. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away."

The Drug Mania (Part I) (May–June 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, May–June 1972.

The purpose of these two articles is not only to inform Christians of the facts about drug addiction, but also to consider the spiritual implications from the scriptural point of view.

The widespread drug craze may seem to be a new phenomenon in society produced on the one hand by the great increase of chemical knowledge in recent years, and on the other hand by the unprecedented alienation of the young, who are disillusioned by our materialistic society with its superficial values and hypocritical attitudes. Yet Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, There is nothing new under the sun. The human race has always had drugs, and the motives driving people to take them are as old as mankind itself.

Scriptural Considerations

Drugs are not new. The Chinese emperor Shen Nung used marijuana in 2700 B.C., and the Chinese also have virtually always had opium. The South American Indians chewed coca leaves from which they obtained cocaine and the Mescalero Apaches of North America actually used the Peyotes Cactus in religious ceremonies as a sacrament. From the cactus they derived mescaline which produces a mild LSD effect. A lecturer in theology at Bristol University, England, recently shocked us by writing about the "Mushroom Cults," even trying to

suggest, that Scripture was the product of mushroom hallucinations.

Many of the inspired writers of Scripture knew of drug usage. Ancient Babylon, the source of much, if not all of the false religion in the world today, probably used a drug mixture (no doubt including alcohol) to enchant her followers. It is to this that Jeremiah refers in chapter 51:7, "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk; the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore, the nations are mad." In Revelation 17 the Apostle John forseeing the unification again of all false religions into one body (possibly in our day by the Ecumenical Movements) calls her "MYSTERY BABYLON GREAT" and describes her in verse 4, "having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." No doubt the reference to the cup and its contents is mystical, being symbolic of false teaching. Nevertheless, when we hear the proponents of the drug cults advocating the use of drugs as a religious experience to expand the mind, to put us in touch with God, remember that earthly religion has been using drugs from the days of antiquity.

Both the apostles Paul and John condemn the use of drugs illegally. The Greek words they use are pharmacia (from which we get our word "pharmacy") which means "enchantment with drugs," and pharmacos meaning "enchanter with drugs." Unfortunately our English versions of the Bible translate these words "witchcraft" or "sorcery" and "sorcerer," no doubt because the medieval witches used drugs in their "witch's brews" or potions to achieve their effects. In fact, in our English translation of the Bible the words witch and sorcerer are used to describe three different types of people:

Spiritist medium (e.g., the witch of Endor, such often having the power of divination).

Magicians (e.g., the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses).

Drug cultists who enchanted by means of drugs.

It is easy to see why medieval witches were reputed to be in league with Satan, to have magical powers, and to use drugs.

In Galatians 5:19-21 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are . . . adultery, fornication . . . idolatry, witchcraft (pharmacia - drugs) . . . murders, drunkenness, revellings . . ." How appropriate to include drugs among the works of the flesh, among sins which are at first pleasant, perhaps, then dominating, then degrading, and finally destroying - Satan's final aim for man.

In Revelation 9:21, the Apostle John, speaking of the evil conditions of the last days, says, "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries (again pharmacia - drugs), nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Doesn't this sound right up to date?

Also, in Revelation 22:15, John gives Scripture's final verdict. Speaking of the Holy City where nothing defileth shall enter in, he says, "For without are dogs, and sorcerers (enchanters with drugs), and whoremongers, and murders, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Reasons for Taking Drugs

There are four main reasons why young people are taking drugs today.

Curiosity. In a way this was Eve's sin. God had given [?] her nothing but good. Nevertheless, at Satan's prompting, she wanted to learn about evil also, so she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result the human race has been expert in evil ever since.

Peer pressure. This means pressure to do what everyone else is doing. No one wants to be a square. Surely, this was Adam's sin. He deliberately disobeyed God to have Eve's company and approval. "Adam was not deceived" (I Tim. 2:14); he knew what he was doing, and why.

Escapism. Not only in the slums but also in the suburbs, the latter representing affluent yet often bitterly unhappy homes, we have created such an unpleasant world for ourselves by our quarrels, lack of consideration, unbridled desire and unsatisfying materialism, that the young take drugs to forget. They are no different from the adults who take their sedatives and alcohol for the same reason. What a commentary on life! I read recently by a columnist who said he drinks every night before supper because "life is too harsh to be taken straight."

Rebellion. They rebel against 1iiThfli [?], against society and against God. In this the young only manifest the universal condition of mankind.

Drugs (Part II) (September–October 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, September–October 1972.

Editor's note: Dr. George Mair, Weston, Ontario, Canada, contributes another article on one of the problems of today. This is a "To Be Informed" article and should prove very helpful.

THE purpose of this second part of the article is to inform Christians of the common drugs being used today and of the effect they have. Marijuana (slang - grass, weed or pot) grows as a type of grass and is dried, made into cigarettes and smoked. The imported variety is stronger, comes from the middle east and is called hashish. It causes a withdrawal from reality, producing a dreamy state, altering time so that seconds seem like minutes, and influencing memory so that you relive old forgotten experiences. Too much causes terrifying nightmares, called "A bad trip" (see L.S.D.).

There is a big argument as to whether it should be legalized. Some say it is no more harmful than alcohol or tobacco (We know how harmful these are!). Others say that even if it produces no actual addiction or no physical change in the brain it harms the mind, and what is most important it may be the first step on the downward road leading to the more body and soul destroying drugs.

L.S.D. (slang - acid) is a colourless liquid which is so powerful that perhaps even enough just to cover a pin head would produce an effect; consequently, it is usually soaked into a sugar cube. Since the police are wise to

the use of sugar cubes, it may be soaked into paper, film, etc. and thus eaten. It produces a distortion of reality. Colours look brighter and perhaps even different, shapes are distorted, walls may tilt, people have huge heads and small bodies, emotions are disturbed, therefore the users may laugh and cry easily, and judgment is perverted. They often feel that they can jump out of a high rise window and fly, or stop a speeding car by standing in front of it. They do not intend to commit suicide; they just do not understand the danger, they are oblivious to it. Of course, they may also have a "bad trip," and if so, they may kill themselves trying to escape from their terror. For this reason they often like a friend to be with them when they take the drug, to talk them through a bad trip and to restrain them by force if necessary.

There is also a danger of a recurrence of the experiences weeks after one has stopped taking the drug for it can also produce insanity.

Sedative Drugs (slang - goofballs) are tranquillizers and sleeping pills and they suppress reality. They take the edge off our worries and may actually produce sleep. Teenagers take them to make themselves dizzy, groggy, etc. I have never quite figured out where the fun is. Many of these, especially the barbituates are very addictive, and an overdose may produce death.

Glue Sniffing is a similar problem. This involves the youngest teenagers. They sniff the glue often within a plastic bag around their head. It is like an anesthetic; it may make them dizzy and sleepy, but it can damage their liver, or even kill them. Furthermore, they can suffocate in the plastic bag.

Stimulant Drugs (slang - speed) like dexedrine or amphetamine are used to stimulate people and keep them awake when they work too long. Since they depress the appetite, they are also used to reduce weight. They likewise make one talkative and jumpy. Teenagers take them for the same stimulant effect, but they prefer to inject them into a vein to shoot speed. It goes directly to the brain with a wallop. It produces sparks, coloured lights, etc., and may intensify other experiences, but it is very damaging to the brain and other organs. Moreover, when the effect has worn off it can produce the blackest of melancholies. Since also the drug community does not practice proper hygiene, they soon pick up a virus on their needles which may result in hepatitis.

Narcotics, however are the real drugs of addiction. These include: opium which the world has known for a long time, cocaine, morphine and codeine (obtained from opium), demerol and other synthetic drugs. The real menace (also obtained from opium - the juice of the poppy) is Heroin (slang H or horse).

Narcotics, like heroin, stop pain and hunger, and produce a nice dreamy feeling as if one were floating in another world. As one becomes addicted to them, they soon lose this effect, and you have to take them regularly just to stay normal. Once addicted one's body has to have them otherwise it will cry out for them in a "withdrawal crisis" in which there will be anguish, restlessness, cramps, excruciating pain and sweating which have been likened to the tortures of the lost.

The addict requires constantly increasing doses to produce the effect, and since the drugs are obtained

through the underworld and are expensive, the addict soon finds he needs sometimes $100 or more a day just to stay healthy. To get this he will lie, cheat, steal and even kill. Females go in for shoplifting and eventually prostitution.

My experience with addicts is that they are inveterate liars. They do not have a trace of shame, for drugs destroy them morally, then mentally, and finally physically.

One of the social problems of today is whether or not to supply drugs to confirmed addicts legally. Some believe this would remove the compulsion that drives them to so much degrading crime when they have to buy them from the underworld. But would this just encourage the spread of this loathesome blight?

These problems are insoluble to mankind. What a mess man makes of things when he departs from the basic rules of his maker. The little sins that man glosses over grow to become monsters.

The problem does not stop here. Teenagers often ask if their drugs, especially the less harmful ones, are more dangerous than their parents' tobacco and alcohol, or their prescribed sedatives. Tobacco kills by lung cancer, heart and artery disease. Alcohol kills by liver and brain disease apart from the carnage drunk drivers cause on the roads. Yet watch a parent turn pale when he finds out his daughter has taken drugs, but he does not want you to criticize the kind of example he is to his children by his continuous drinking and smoking.

Let us come nearer home. What about prescribed sedatives? We need them because of the worries we cause ourselves through disobedience to the Lord in the

ordering of our lives and in the bringing up of our children. Our worries are great because of our lack of faith in the Lord. He knows our difficulties and has a purpose in them, and has an answer for them. Do we really believe Philippians 4:6, "Be careful (cautious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep (guard) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. If we really had faith, would we need sedatives?

In closing let us realize that we have been considering terrible conditions, sinful conditions, conditions that hopefully do not directly affect us. Let us also realize that our God is a holy God, and He has made those strong assertions: "Without faith it is impossible to please God . . ." (Heb. 11:6). "Whatever is not of faith is sin . . ." (Rom. 14:23).