

LILIAS TROTTER'S LAST LESSONS: SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS



“We have started Sunday afternoon Bible readings, in my room, on the seven carvings of Solomon’s temple. That temple seems to be in its full sense a picture of the perfect service of the Church during the reign of Christ that is to come, and therefore it behoves us to see that we are already learning the lessons that we shall put into their full use when His Kingdom comes.”

~ Lili Trotter
(Diary, May 1928)

Late Spring, 1928, Lili began teaching Sunday afternoon Bible lessons in her room, studying life “over the Jordan” as pre-figured in the carvings of Solomon’s temple – an especially poignant experience as her own life was drawing to a close, literally, in a matter of weeks (August 28, 1928). One can imagine those quiet Sunday afternoons as Lili, propped up against pillows, the map of North Africa above her head, added a lifetime of wisdom to her scriptural insight. Her diary records her notes about the temple carvings, beginning with the oxen – “lowest in the scale of service” – working through the portals of the porch to the cherubim around the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. One can’t help but notice that her writing becomes fainter as her life is slowly ebbing, the next-to-last lesson, trailing with these last words, “*Open flowers surely tell of the joy that is to run through all.*” Her concluding words and her final lesson are recorded through the notes of a listener.

As she expounded on the symbolic significance of each carving and the lessons to be derived therein, it is likely her listeners noted how fully her own life had become the embodiment of those very qualities: the service of the ox. . . the fearlessness of the lion. . . the purity of the lily. . . the fruitfulness of the pomegranate. . . the victory of the palm tree. . . the joyfulness of the open flowers. . . the pure worship of the cherubim. And it seems somehow fitting that her “last lessons” focused on the beautiful carvings fitted for the house of worship bringing together so perfectly her love of The Creator with her love for beauty and artistic expression as presented in these carvings.

Last lessons. We tend to “listen up” when one who has lived life well ventures to draw from their experience with final words of wisdom. Each Sunday in July and August, we will post – here on our blog – each of Liliat’s “lessons” from Solomon’s Temple carvings, consecutively, as she presented them during her final weeks on earth. May we learn from her eternal perspective as she approaches the *“full life to come”* – her Heavenly Home.

It may also be of interest to read biographer Miriam Rockness’ blog post, “Last Lessons,” in which she reflects on Liliat’s “last lessons” and the lessons of others who have followed a life of faith:

[LAST LESSONS | Liliat Trotter \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.wordpress.com)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON ONE: THE OX



Let us learn the lesson of the ox, who stands lowest in the scale of service: his place is under the yoke, in lowly submission. Let us understand first of all the “yoking together with Christ” and learn what that yoke-fellowship with Him means. If we look at Jeremiah 31:18 we find that it is Christ Himself Who takes us under His yoke. As we may see in the East, a trained bullock trains the “unaccustomed” one by being yoked with it and letting it, if necessary, go down into the dust dragging and kicking. He finds no relief for his bruised shoulders till at last he gives in and lets the yoke fall into its place and stay there. Then he finds the fulfillment of the promise “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,” for lo! it is Christ Who is yoked with us and Who bears all that part of the burden that is too heavy for us. This taking of His yoke in uttermost yieldedness binds us into one spirit with Him, and then His peace settles down. The hour when we accept all in utter humility is marked with the words “Ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

Another characteristic of the ox is his patience, and this is also another lesson that we learn in this yoke-fellow service. We see now something of the supreme patience of Christ. His hands and feet bound in swaddling clothes in those hours in Bethlehem, and His hands and feet bound in His last hours on the Cross, were but a symbol between the two. We see His patience during His temptation, with present physical exhaustion and hunger; patience all through His ministry, Patience in taking up His Cross when He might have escaped it. His patient waiting for the Kingdom, and patience for His glory.

And so it is just that question, whether we will “learn of” Him, whether we will take His yoke, not only in the big things, but in the small trivialities of daily life, in the tiny units that make up

the whole, just in any small beginnings that God may give us. Then rewarding His servant He said "Ye have been faithful in the little things."

Let us learn this faithfulness, this patience, in the little things as a preparation for that full rich time when the servants and their Lord shall reign together in His glory.

~ Lilius Trotter (May 1928)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON TWO: THE LION



Today's carvings for our Bible reading show The Lion, a great contrast to the lowly patience lesson of last Sunday, The Ox. "Bold as a lion," (his chief characteristic) would be more truly translated as "fearless as a lion." And fearless he is as he stalks his prey only to get within sight of it, when he rushes upon it, not with stealth as the tiger or the panther, but with a roar of victory. "The lion roaring for his prey" is one of his marks of old.

Another characteristic is that he fights to win. It was told Israel in this very context, in Baalim's vision of the victory over the Land, of a promise that he should be as the lion who would not lie down til he would eat the prey and drink of the blood of the slain.

A rich beautiful fearlessness comes from drinking in the spirit of Jesus, for all through His life he is setting it forth, as in:

1. The high standard set by the Sermon on the Mount.
2. The fearless way He dealt with His disciples, never bribing followers with promises of an easy path.
3. In His dealings with those whom He had to reprove and rebuke.
4. The fearless looking forward to Gethsemane and Calvary, knowing what was coming, and going straight on to the very end.

He can pour that into our spirits. All through the first chapters of Joshua they were told to go fearlessly, and go on they did as appointed, though they must have been scoffed at and laughed to scorn by the inhabitants watching them go round and round Jericho their stronghold in this apparently aimless way. The same at Pentecost after the disciples had once more come into full

touch with their Lord and his Spirit poured upon them. At once poor old Peter, who awhile back had “stood without” and “followed afar,” dashed into the middle of that hostile crowd, with so powerful a message that the result was – 3000!

It seems as if we had a great deal to learn in this, whether fearlessness comes naturally to us or not. Fear, like courage, is infectious, and it is most necessary in a Moslem land that we should learn to master it, for one of the greatest hindrances of these people is their fearfulness. It takes some time to realize what a huge part fear plays in their lives, but they are just riddled with every kind of terror and superstition.

If there is anything from which we shrink, anything that we feel we cannot face, just have it quietly out with God. Come to our Lord and ask Him that just there His Spirit may come into our spirit and His fearlessness flow into our fearfulness.

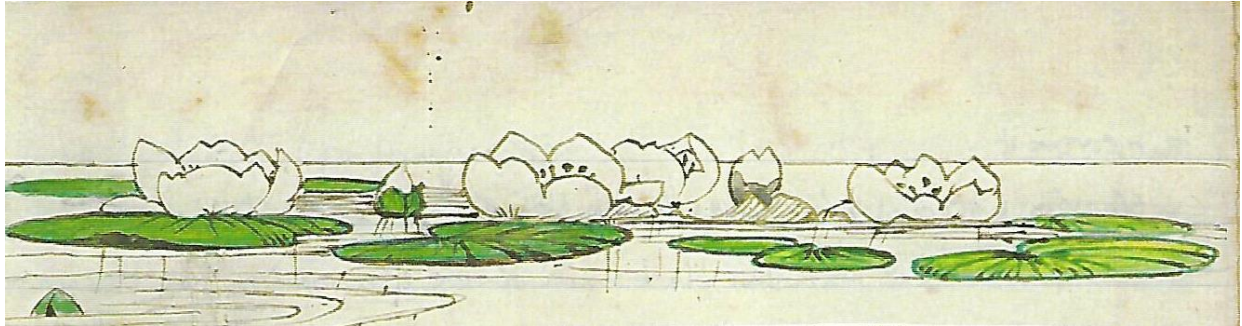
The disciples may not have known the significance of what the angel said “as ye have seen Him go up into heaven.” (Acts 1) But just as Elisha’s request for Elijah’s spirit was granted because he saw his departure into heaven, and his mantle was allowed to fall on him so Christ’s mantle fell on them after ten days. And it is just so in our own souls: It is as we see Jesus, as He gets absolutely revealed by the Holy Spirit, as we look up to Him and Him alone, that we shall be able to drink in His Spirit without effort, and have confidence about God, about His Word, about the path by which He leads us. So we don’t need to work ourselves up into any emotional state, but just simply look straight up to Him.

“Jesus is Master of the impossible.”

“I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.”

~ Liliias Trotter (May 19, 1928)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON THREE: THE LILY-WORK



Whitsunday. The “White Sunday” of the baptism of old in the early Church links itself with the lily-work of the laver’s brim, that comes next in the Temple carvings. It does not seem quite sure what the lilies of the field in Palestine were. Some think they were the anemones of the hill-sides. Might it possibly be that they were the water-lilies which cover all the quiet pools in Palestine? In any case there must have been lilies of some sort that stood for purity and fragrance, as the Song of Solomon shows.

It will be a wonderful day when purity through and through, in the reign of the “greater than Solomon” will mark all our work. It is only as we get to know ourselves that we realize how intense that need of purity is for the perfect service of the hereafter. When that day comes we shall have been brought out from the “blameless” that God looks for now to the “faultless” of His perfect work. And as we take present life on the victory side of Jordan to be the preparation for that day of coming purity, we shall realize that the heart-purifying is one of the surest marks that that passage over Jordan has been taken. Of all the descriptions that I have ever seen of that work of *present* cleansing, that is already made for us by the Spirit for taking on the Canaan side of Jordan, this by George Fox always seems to me the almost absolutely perfect:

“I knew Jesus and He was very precious to my soul; but I found something in me that could not keep sweet and patient and kind. I did what I could to keep it down, but it was there. I besought Jesus to do something for me, and when I gave Him my will, He came to my heart, and took out all that would not be sweet, all that would not be kind, all that would not be patient, and then He shut the door.”

“Then He shut the door” is the seal on that purification of here and now. It brings us under the power of the mighty cleansing of the precious Blood, the “goes on cleansing” of John 1:7. And that work is completed on our side in purifying our souls by “obeying the truth of the Spirit,” “obedience to the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ,” as fresh light from His word reveals fresh stretches of need. This obedience is the “washing of water by the word” as point after point in the way of God’s commandments flashes out.

This is the great circle of Solomon's laver: the brim of that sea for the priests to wash in – “a hand breadth in thickness” – was all carved in lily-work. It stood, that laver, in the forefront as the priest went inwards to the sanctuary.

~ Lillas Trotter (May 27, 1928)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON FOUR: THE POMEGRANATES



Pomegranates with lily-work above them, wreathing the capitals of the pillars of the porch: that would be the next carved work on the way to the inner sanctuary. The pomegranates would be clustered into the network of the chains – four hundred on the two pillars – so we read in the Chronicles version.

In Canticles the garden of pomegranates in its budding comes three times over, and at the end the spiced wine of the pomegranate.

“Filled with the fruits of righteousness”. . . That is the pomegranate’s word to us: each perfect little jewel of fruit embedded its parchment case. Love, joy, peace, the God-ward side. Then longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, the fruit that is called forth by those around us, and all the more by the difficult points in our surroundings. And then the fruit that comes in the line of our own character building – faithfulness, lowliness, self-control – such is the actual rendering of this last trio.

And, as we see in Micah 7:1, it is ripe fruit for which God looks, in its beauty, and sweetness, and tenderness. And among all the marks of ripeness the most wonderful in the power of reproduction that starts then and there the power of shedding and multiplying around us each of

these seeds of the Spirit. “That your fruit should remain” was the Lord’s promise, and see how the “love” of Rutherford, the “joy” of Terstegen and the “peace” of Mme. Guyon have gone on reproducing themselves in generation after generation, and the fruit has remained and multiplied for many a hidden life to which it cannot be traced till the day of manifestation.

~ Lilius Trotter (June 3, 1928)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON FIVE: THE PALM-TREES



The palm-tree is the picture of the practical life of service. “Ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” – this is the palm-tree’s lesson.

It gives its wood for the rafters of the Arab house; its leaf stalks for its laths, for his fences, his spring mattress, the cradle for his baby; the stem is woven to be his ropes, and the leaves, stripped off, plait into his basket, his hat, the mat for his floor. The three parts – leaf for paper, rods for sticks, chump ends for coal – make his fuel. These chump ends of the leafstalks also serve as hockey sticks for his boys and for tombstones for his dead.

Then comes the fruit-bearing for his sustenance and support – seventy named varieties of dates, from the ‘deglet en nour’ of the caids’ table, to the hard, acorn-like variety (“heavenly biscuits” we used to call them) that rattle in your hand. And even the datestalks have their use as brooms, and the date-stones, saved into the gullet of the longsuffering camel, form his food on a long trek when there is no better.

And even yet the palm-tree has not given its uttermost. “I will very gladly spend and be spent out for you” finds a last fulfillment. The tree bears till it can bear no more and stands with a little crown of shabby looking leaves, hardly more than a cabbage-like tuft. The Arab swarms up the trunk with a gourd, and lops it off, and the gourd fills with rich sweet palm wine. The tree has kept its best for that last act of service.

“The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to give His life.” It is from the Son of Man that we have learnt to minister; some outpoured “giving” may be silently preparing, to crown the little un-noticed ministries.

And when we think of the palm-tree bringing all this out of the impossible soil of the desert, we see how its fronds have won the right to be the symbol of victory – victory over our circumstances – bringing the very best out of our lives by the same conditions as the palm. It must stand, so the natives say, with its feet in the water and its head in the fire, and so must we.

Are we studying like the palm, to become available to the uttermost to those around us “for Jesus’ sake”? To the natives, to our fellow-missionaries, to the household whose atmosphere we help to make or mar? And this not in a haphazard way, but with lives laid down in sacrifice, our responsibility being not only what we are when we arrive, but what we have the power to become in spirit, soul, and body.

Nor does the matter end thus – rather, thus does it begin. If we study the parable of the talents and the pounds, we see the bearing of faithfulness to opportunity great and small on the time when the King comes back having received the Kingdom. And beyond that again who can say where the fruitage may end, for this life’s “patient continuance in well-being”? For “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.” The harvest of the trivial and the monotonous may lie out beyond the stars.

~ Lilius Trotter (June 10, 1928)

**The date palm has been named, along with the camel, as one of the two treasures of the Southland. Little wonder that Lilius looked to the hardy practicality of the palm tree as a symbol of service, identifying how each part of the palm – wood, leaf, leafstalks, stem, dates, date stones – provides support, sustenance and even sport. The ultimate service and victory (!) of the palm tree, like that of “The Son of Man,” came with its dying offering: “The rich sweet palm wine.”*

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON SIX: OPEN FLOWERS



“Open flowers.” They are the last but one in the series of the Temple carvings – patience and fearlessness and purity, fruitfulness and the passion for service – we have seen them all symbolized. Open flowers surely tell of the joy that is to run through all.

We speak of the God of love and the God of peace, so seldom the God of joy. But God is the God of joy, and we must drink in the spirit of His joy. “I will anoint him with the oil of gladness” (Psalm 45:7) and the flowers speak of the gladness that is in the heart of God.

Flowers are not a *necessity*. They are just an *overflowing* of God’s gladness. Corn and wine and oil have practically no flower to speak of. And if we look closely at each [flower], it seems to reveal His joy in a different way. “Thy face the heart of every flower that grows” (George McDonald). You can read Him in them – merry heart of the celandines and the pure simple happiness of the primrose and the shout of the daffodil’s gold trumpet.

And we can triumph just by carrying aloft our joy, so that it may shine right through the house, and carry its message wherever we go. “Of all the lights you carry in your face, joy shines the farthest out to sea.”

Jesus has promised that “My joy might remain with you,” and if there is nothing between Him and us (and a very small cloud can dim the sun) then we must have His joy abiding in us.

He didn't promise us ease and comfort – He was Himself on His way to Gethsemane – but He *did* promise joy, and we may have it in the midst of any weight or heaviness that may be ours to bear.

“God the gladness of my joy.”

~ Liliias Trotter (June 17, 1928)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE CARVINGS LESSON SEVEN: THE CHERUBIMS



We come now to the carvings of the very innermost part of the building – the cherubims of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. The seraphims are the showers-forth of the Glory of God in heaven, while the cherubims are the showers-forth of that glory on earth.

To follow the story of the cherubims through the Bible, we find:

- 1) The cherubim of Eden, Genesis 3.
- 2) The cherubim of redemption above the mercy seat.
- 3) The cherubim of the Church's full and wonderful service of Ezekiel 1.
- 4) The cherubim of the living figure of Revelation 4.

1)The Eden cherubim. Here he vindicates God's glory and represents what the Church should be – an exponent of God.

2) Next, in Exodus 25, we see the cherubims of redemption, one on each side of the Ark, in the darkness and silence of that holy place, to which, through its enveloping curtain of a thickness of 3 inches, no sound, not even a foot-fall, could penetrate, and all was dark but for His glory. Have we learned the Holy Silence of the Sprinkled Blood? Of getting into the still sanctuary with God and claiming the power of the precious Blood of Christ for ourselves and these poor souls around us – the more so as the powers of evil rally for their last attack. I go through every room in the house beginning with the Arab courts below every morning – I don't think I ever miss – just claiming the power of the precious Blood on each, that no power of the enemy may take root or

spoil His work; and so also with each of the Stations. As the last days come, we must more and more over-come by the Blood of the Lamb. It is a great and definite responsibility.

3) The cherubim in Ezekiel 1. These have each the face of a lion, a man, an ox, and an eagle. This is the cherubim of service and is the picture of strength – each figure being the most kingly of his realm.

And God wants *strong* service from us, not weak-kneed, haphazard sort of service but our very best, our very utmost. And not only does He seek spiritual strength but strength of character. The strength that grows from self-restraint, self-denial, and self-control; from mortifying our body and saying “no” to inducements. “I keep my body and bring it into subjection.” “I will *not* be brought under the power of bodily comforts!”

These also show the spirit of entire yielded obedience. “They turned not as they went.” We must be always facing God’s Will and not have to wrench ourselves round to do it. I think of my cousin who had just married. The newlyweds were invited by a friend to spend a weekend and her husband had accepted. Turning to the young bride the friend asked if she too accepted. With flashing eyes she replied, “I have consented already in him.”

4) Revelation 4. Here we find the cherubim up in the glory, having now got six wings, like the seraphim. (They seem at first to have had only two, and in Ezekiel, four.) We find them echoing the song which the seraphims have been singing so long, bringing God’s glory out from earth to heaven: “Thy will be done on earth,” “Holy, holy, holy,” which is made by all the tiny bits of victory in which each one of us has our share.

~ Liliias Trotter (June 24, 1928)