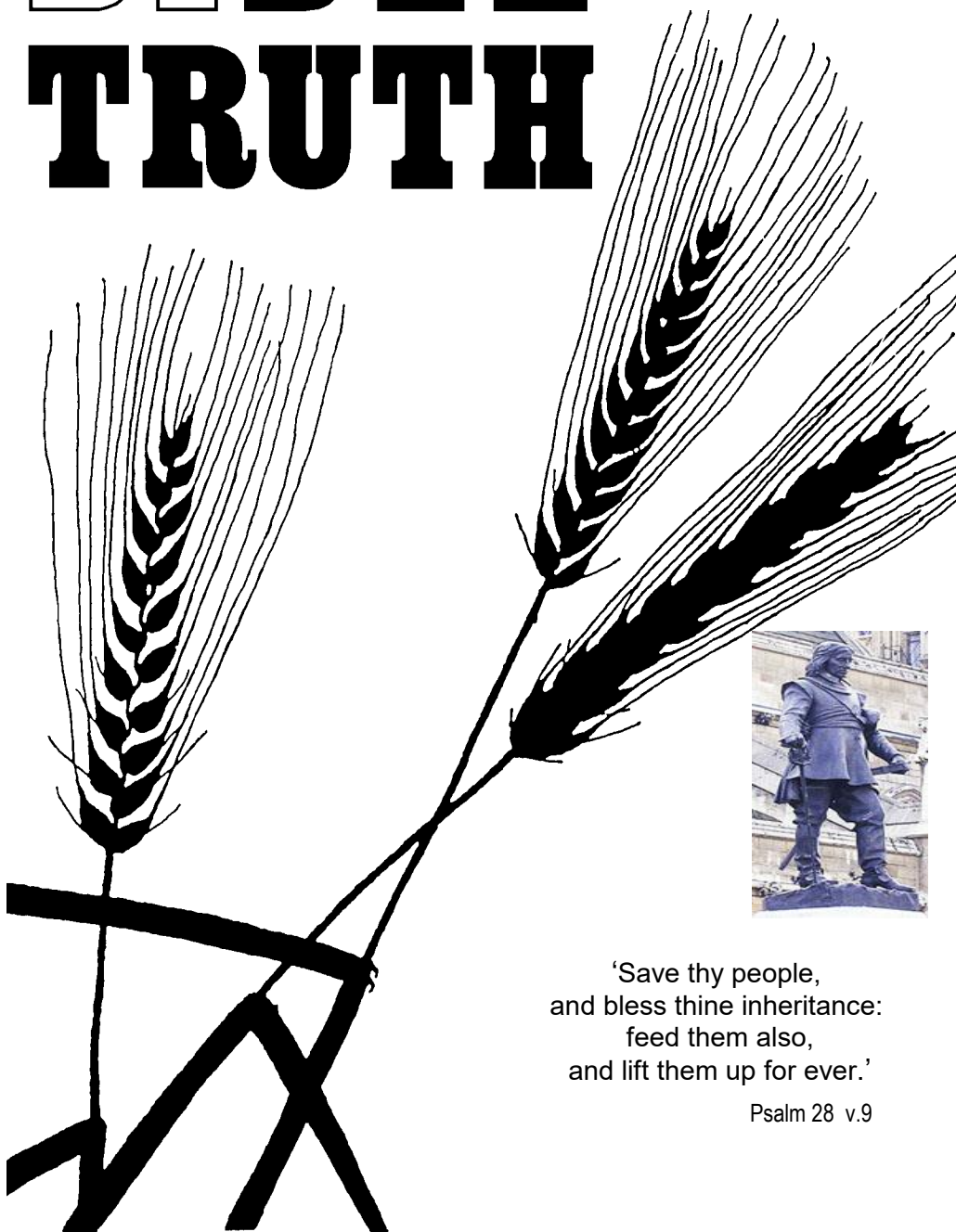


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‘Save thy people,
and bless thine inheritance:
feed them also,
and lift them up for ever.’

Psalm 28 v.9

Olive Tree Theology

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The Wild Olive Prophecy

‘And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’

Romans ch.11 vv 17- 27

The olive is a symbol of divine blessing.

‘But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.’

Psalm 52 v.8

‘... thy children like olive plants round about thy table.’

Psalm 128 v.3

The olive is the symbol of beauty, luxuriance, prosperity, sovereignty and peace, which makes it a perfect symbol for Israel in prophecy. The olive tree, in fact, was one of the principal symbols used of both houses of Israel. Speaking to Judah, Jeremiah says,

'The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: ... '.

Jeremiah ch.11 v.16

And Hosea declared concerning Ephraim, the Ten Tribes that,
'His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, ... '.

Hosea ch.14 v.6

The olive therefore has a prophetic meaning in the Bible, and is specifically an Israel symbol associated with the destiny of both the houses of Israel and Judah. The olive was essential in the life of God's people. Reverend W.G. Davenport stated,

'It was closely connected with the domestic life of the chosen people, and was never absent in one form or another from their public ceremonies and religious worship. Olive oil furnished the fuel for the light that burned perpetually before the veil in the Tabernacle; it was a necessary ingredient of the "holy anointing oil" with which the priests and vessels of the sanctuary were consecrated to the service of God; it was always offered as a part of the daily burnt-offering throughout their generations. Thus the olive was made a symbol of God's blessing resting upon His chosen people'.

The Apostle Paul borrowed this olive tree symbolism to discuss the rejoining of the two branches of God's people Israel, in one of his most important prophecies Romans ch.11 vv 17- 27 where he writes, 'But if some of the branches were broken off, while you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them to share the richness [of the root and sap] of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches and pride yourself at their expense. If you do boast and feel superior, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root [that supports] you. You will say then, branches were broken (pruned) off so that I might be grafted in! That is true. But they were broken (pruned) off because of their unbelief (their lack of real faith), and you are established through faith [because you do believe]. So do not become proud and conceited, but rather stand in awe and be reverently afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches [because of unbelief], neither will He spare you [if you are guilty of the same offence]. Then note and appreciate the gracious kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's gracious kindness to you - provided you continue in His grace and abide in His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off (pruned away). And even those others [the fallen branches, Jews], if they do not persist in

[clinging to] their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and against nature grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier will it be to graft these natural [branches] back on [the original parent stock of] their own olive tree. Lest you be self-opinionated (wise in your own conceits), I do not want you to miss this hidden truth and mystery, brethren: a hardening (insensibility) has [temporarily] befallen a part of Israel [to last] until the full number of the ingathering of the Gentiles has come in, And so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob, (see Isaiah ch.59 v.20). And this will be My covenant (My agreement) with them when I shall take away their sins (see also Isaiah ch.27 v.9 & Jeremiah ch.31 v.33 Amplified Version).

The prophecy states that 'some' Jews were in unbelief and cut off, not 'all' or 'most'. Yet modern Dispensational-Futurism is predicated upon the claim that the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ, and for that reason God had to turn to a 'plan B' and call upon some non-Israelite peoples to fulfil Israel's work and calling! If that were the case, the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea were seriously wrong. They predicted that Israel would fulfil its calling (see Isaiah ch.49 v.3, Jeremiah ch.31 vv 31-37 and Hosea chs 1 vv 10-11 & 2 vv 14-20). No, the prophets were not in error, for Israel does indeed fulfil prophecy under another name. What name was this?

The Apostle says that all of Israel will be saved when the 'Gentiles' are grafted in. Commentaries assume that the Gentiles are exclusively non-Semitic peoples, but if so, why would the grafting in of non-Israelites result in an 'all Israel' olive tree? (see Romans ch.11 v.26). To the contrary, the uniting of Jew and non-Jew would instead result in a very diverse 'all nations' tree!

[Editor's note. Paul's terminology certainly makes sense if the so-called Gentiles are in reality the lost and 'Gentilised' ten-tribe house of Israel being reunited with the believing branch of the house of Judah. However, scripture also makes clear that 'strangers' can be incorporated into the Israel family after so many generations and others into a spiritual Israel by adoption (see Ephesians ch.1 v.5).]

Paul particularly has in mind Ezekiel's prophecy of the latter-day rejoining of the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah that says this.

'Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take

another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: [see also Jeremiah ch.50 v.4] Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever [see Isaiah ch.60 v.21, Joel ch.3 v.20 & Amos ch.9 v.15]. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Ezekiel ch.37 v 16-28

The *Haydock Bible Commentary* on Ezekiel ch.37 v.17 says, 'The prophet ... engrafted them one into the other, to shew that all the people should be united'. This was also Paul's language in Romans chapter 11. Notice the multitude of very close prophetic parallels

between the Apostle Paul's olive tree prophecy and Ezekiel's vision of the joining of the two sticks.

EZEKIEL chapter 37	ROMANS chapter 11
'the sticks' v.20 [Hebrew = 'wood']	'the branches' v.18
'one stick ... For Judah' v.16	'natural branches' v.21
'the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows' v.19	'a wild olive tree [branch] v.17
'So shall they be my people, and I will be their God' v.23	'thou standeth by faith' v.20
'make a covenant of peace with' v.26	'the goodness ... of God' v.22
'join them one to another into one stick' v.17	'shall be grafted in' v.23
'I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: v.21	'until the fulness of the Gentiles [<i>ingathering</i>] be come in. v.25
'my servant David [i.e. Messiah of David] shall be their prince for ever' v.25	'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer., v.26
'I will save them' v.23	'so all Israel shall be saved' v.26
'they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes' v.24	'shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob' v.26
'they all shall have one shepherd' v.24	'There shall come ... the Deliverer, v.26
'I will make a covenant of peace' v.26	'my covenant unto them' v.27
'and will cleanse them' v.23	'I shall take away their sins' v.27

It is interesting that artists who have depicted Ezekiel's two sticks have made them of olive wood, which is very likely what the prophet, and Paul, both had in mind. Reviewing the clear parallel between these two prophecies, this close duplication was no accident and the Apostle Paul was in fact reinforcing the fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy under the New Covenant. Paul would have been familiar with olive culture in that part of the world, and know something modern westerners do not. Only olives can be grafted onto olive trees! You simply cannot graft lemons, apples, grapes, tomatoes or

whatever else you prefer on to an olive tree. The olive species grafted on may be wild or cultivated, but cannot be some other disparate genus. In allegorical terms, the Apostle Paul, like Ezekiel, was depicting Israel's coming reuniting and redemption. Modern Bible commentaries readily recognise that Ezekiel's prophecy specifically concerned Israel, not other nations. Yet Paul's similar parable is routinely misunderstood as a world salvation matter, when instead it is similarly focused on the theme of the rejoining of the two houses of Israel through faith in Jesus Christ, David's Greater Son.

Nineteenth-century scholar, Landseer Mackenzie observed, 'the doctrinal teaching of the day is mistaken and wrong in some very material points. These errors I do not propose to discuss in detail. But beyond doubt the chief of them, upon which the others depend, is the misapprehension as to who were the "Gentiles" to whom "the gospel of the kingdom" was preached, and who also received it. Correct this, and the others would fall of themselves, like dead leaves from a parasitical plant when the main stem is cut'.

Banner of Israel xxi pp 248

Amen! We need to make known this key Scriptural truth today!
