

A ROOT OF JESSE

After the Cuban revolution, fourteen thousand children were, without their parents, airlifted out of Cuba in Operation Peter Pan. Carlos Eire, a historian at Yale university, was one of them. He wrote in the *Washington Post* about his experience: “My family and native land were destroyed by the brutal Castro regime. In 1959, as an 8-year old, I listened to mobs shout “*paredon!* (to the firing squad!) I watched televised executions, and was terrified by the incessant pressure to agree with the bearded dictator’s ideals. As the months passed, relatives, friends, and neighbors began to disappear. Some of them emerged from prison with detailed accounts of the tortures they endured, but many never reappeared, their lives cut short by firing squads. I also witnessed the government’s seizure of all private property – down to the ring on one’s finger – and the collapse of my country’s economy. I began to feel as if some monstrous force was trying to steal my mind and soul through incessant indoctrination. (Washington Post, December 22, 2014) Three years after he arrived in the United States, his mother escaped Cuba and was reunited with her son. Carlos’s father was never allowed to leave Cuba, and Carlos was not allowed to attend his father’s funeral. On the Twenty-fifth day of November, in the Year of Our Lord Two-thousand and Sixteen, Fidel Castro died. Castro had ruled Cuba for nearly sixty years. Upon hearing news of Castro’s death, many Cubans living in the United States danced in the streets. Many people have denounced him as a brutal dictator. In Castro’s funeral procession, the car carrying his ashes broke down, and soldiers had to push it the rest of the way. A fitting end to a cruel communist tyrant.

Because of Israel’s sins and impenitence, God made the Assyrians to conquer them, and oppress them. In the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet prophesied of Israel, “For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.” (Isaiah 9:18, 19) Israel would be like a forest ravaged by fire, and burned to the ground. In the tenth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet proclaimed God’s judgment against the cruel Assyrians who would oppress God’s people, Israel. He said, “Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless!” (Isaiah 10:1, 2) God said He would punish the Assyrians for their wickedness, just as He punished the Israelites for theirs. Although the Assyrians would be God’s instrument of judgment against rebellious Israel, that did not excuse the Assyrians. God would judge also them for their wickedness. He said He would smite them with a rod, and lift up His staff against them as He did against Egypt. (Isaiah 10:24) Moreover, God said He would cut His enemies down to size. He likened His enemies to a great tree that would be cut down, even a forest of trees that would be cut clear. He said, “Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.” (Isaiah 10:33, 34) How would He accomplish this? He would do so by sending a Savior, a descendant of King David, son of Jesse, who would rule righteously, and bring peace on earth. He said, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow

and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (Isaiah 11:1-11) From the burned-out forest of Israel would grow a tiny shoot, and that shoot would grow into a great forest which would some day encompass the entire globe. One man would rise to be king over the earth. Not only Israel would acknowledge His righteous reign, but the nations as well. This man would rule righteously, because He would not rule selfishly. He would not make judgments independent of God, but in dependance upon Him. During His reign, there would be no more conflict between the peoples on the earth, because everyone would know the Lord. He would subdue His enemies and bring peace to the earth. And How would He subdue them? Not by force of arms. Not as a tyrant, casting dissidents into prison, and torturing them until they confess. No, He would subdue them by the rod of His mouth, and by the breath of His lips. By His word would He subdue them. By His wisdom would He win them. By His spirit would He convert them. The nations would see His righteousness, and they would hear His wisdom. They would recognize Him as king, and submit to His righteous reign. He finally did come, and His name is Jesus. The pious of Israel waited patiently for this Messiah to come. Most died before He came, however. Some lived to see His day, and were overjoyed. We who are alive to day have not seen Him with our eyes, yet we behold Him with the eyes of faith. We believe in Him, we love Him, and we hail Him as king, adnthrough us, His faithful servants who proclaim His Word, He is conquering the world.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen.