

Preparation for the Messiah

and certain other desert plants. The potash, after being repeatedly purified, is boiled with the oil and the mass allowed to cool, and then the soap settles into a solid mass.

REFINER—The process of refining silver by melting it with lead is very ancient. The crude silver and the lead are put into cru-

cibles in a furnace, whose arched roof reflects the heat back upon the surface of the metals. As the oxide of lead forms on the top, it is blown off by bellows until it becomes thinner and thinner and entirely disappears and the bright surface of the silver reflects the face of the refiner.

APPLICATION

My messenger, v. 1. At the great Edinburgh review this year flags flashed signals, guns thundered military salutes, aides-de-camp spurred their horses across the parks, all heralds of the king's approach. Our Heavenly King, too, is coming, but on clouds of glory and with accompanying angels, to judge the world. The minister, the teacher, the Christian scholar are all messengers sent out to announce His divine approach. Let us be faithful to our mission.

Fullers' sope, v. 2. The ancient fuller would take a piece of cloth, wash it with a strong lye, beat and rub it very hard, and finally expose it to the sun's rays, until it was so thoroughly bleached that it became white and glistening. God cleanses our sin stained souls in the precious blood of His own Son; through the trials and sacrifices of life He rubs out of our nature its old habits and its sordid inclinations; and, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit whitens them, until at last they shall shine resplendent as His own Son. "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." His glorious image shall be reflected in us.

As a refiner, v. 3. God's fires are not like the lightning, which blasts the scathed tree. Rather are they a furnace. At Shields, what

The Beauty of Holiness impressed Whitefield was that the glass was put into three successive furnaces. He asked,

"Why do you put it into so many fires?" He was told the first was not hot enough, nor the second, but the third was needed to make it transparent. Thus God puts His children into one furnace of affliction after another, until they, too, shall become transparent in the beauty of holiness.

A swift witness, v. 5. Belshazzar quaffed his wine in proud scorn of the Almighty; loud,

unbelieving laughter filled his halls, when suddenly the fingers of a hand wrote his doom upon the wall, and that night his soul was summoned to judgment before his Maker.

Not infrequently since then has God proved Himself a swift Witness against evil-doing, and changed the shouts of revelry into shrieks of despair. Let us never be found where we would be ashamed for death to overtake us and catch us in any sinful act.

Return unto me, v. 7. This command is for all ages. Polycarp, the disciple of John and the martyr at the age of ninety-five, was converted when he was nine years old; Matthew Henry at eleven; President Edwards at seven; Dr. Watts at nine; and Richard Baxter could not remember when he did not love God. Any child old enough to know that God asks his obedience is old enough to be converted.

Rob God? v. 8. The very audacity of the thought staggers us. Men will pick locks, scale walls, force windows, break open tills, cheat, tell lies in private or on the exchange, to rob one another, but surely they will not dare to

Stealing from God steal from Him who knows all things and whose watchful eye never slumbers. Yes, this they even dare, not by breaking into churches and committing sacrilege, but by withholding from Him what is His due. Everyone who, for selfish reasons, diminishes his contribution to God's work, robs his Maker.

Cursed with the curse (Rev. Ver.), v. 9. Men who keep their gold are miserable compared with those who expend it for the good of men and the glory of God.

The Curse of Selfishness Alderman, the Moorish caliph of Cordova, left behind him a paper, in which he declared that for fifty years he had been caliph, possessed riches,