

Blest Land of Judea

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1837.

Lucia Smith, 1918.

Blest land of Judea! thrice hallowed of song;  
Where the holiest of memories pilgrim-like throng;  
In the shade of thy palms, by the shores of thy sea,  
On the hills of thy beauty, my heart is with thee.

With the eye of a spirit, I look on thy shore,  
Where pilgrim and prophet have lingered before;  
With the glide of a spirit, I traverse the sod  
Made bright by the steps of the angels of God.

Blue sea of the hills! in my spirit I hear  
Thy waters, Gennesaret, chime on my ear;  
Where the lowly and just with the people sat down,  
And thy spray on the dust of His sandals was thrown.

Beyond are Bethulia's mountains of green,  
And the desolate hills of the wild Gadarene;  
And I pause on the goat crags of Tabor to see  
The gleam of thy waters, O dark Galilee!

Hark! a sound in the valley where, swollen and strong,  
Thy river, O Kishon, is sweeping along;  
Where the Canaanite strove with Jehovah in vain,  
And thy torrent grew dark with the blood of the slain.

There, down from his mountain, stern Zebulon came,  
And Napthali's stay, with his eyeballs of flame,  
And the chariots of Jabin rolled harmlessly on,  
For the strength of the Lord was Abinoam's son!

There sleep the still rocks, and the caverns which rang  
To the song which the beautiful prophetess sang,  
When the princes of Issachar stood by her side,  
And the shout of a host in its triumph replied.

Lo, Bethlehem's hill-site before me is seen,  
With the mountains around and the valleys between,  
There rested the shepherds of Judah, and there  
The song of the angels rose sweet on the air.

And Bethany's palm-trees in beauty still throw  
Their shadows at noon on the ruins below;  
But where are the sisters who hastened to greet  
The lowly Redeemer, and sit at His feet?

I tread where the twelve in their wayfaring trod;  
I stand where they stood, with the Chosen of God  
Where His blessing was heard, and His lessons were taught,  
Where the blind were restored and the healing was wrought.

O here with His flock the sad Wanderer came;  
These hills He toiled over in grief are the same;  
The founts where He drank by the wayside still flow,  
And the same airs are blowing which breathed on His brow.

And throned on her hills sits Jerusalem yet,  
But with dust on her forehead and chains on her feet;  
For the crown of her pride to the mocker hath gone,

But wherefore this dream of the earthly abode  
Of humanity clothed in the brightness of God?  
There my spirit but turned from the outward and dim,  
It could gaze, even now, on the presence of Him.

Not in clouds and in terrors, but gentle as when  
In love and in meekness He moved among men;  
And the voice which breathed peace to the waves of the sea,  
In the hush of my spirit would whisper to me!

And what if my feet may not tread where He trod,  
These ears hear the dashing of Galilee's flood,  
Nor my eyes see the cross which He bowed Him to bear,  
Nor my knees press Gethsemane's garden of prayer,

Yet, loved of the Father, Thy Spirit is near  
To the meek and the lowly and the penitent here;  
And the voice of Thy love is the same even now  
As at Bethany's tomb or on Olivet's brow.

Oh, the outward hath gone! but in glory and power,  
The spirit surviveth the things of an hour;  
Unchanged, undecaying, its Pentecost flame  
On the heart's secret altar is burning the same.