

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 121

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Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Determined not to delay in sending out the Study Notes on the Book of Revelation has meant this issue of the C. L. is a few days late.

I wish to thank those who have written during the past month, however, in order to avoid any further delay, no personal letters are enclosed with this C. L.

From your letters: One correspondent comments on last months Letter, "Brother Dawson's exhortation which in general was a good one in encouragement but I noted in the fourth paragraph down on page two, he says "The real truth about ourselves is that we are weak, and our motives, at best, are frequently suspect..." What does he mean by weak? They said of the Apostle Paul "His bodily presence is weak." But was Paul weak-willed? Certainly not, he was strong in faith and could do all things through Christ and His Father whose strength was made perfect in weakness. Jesus Himself was crucified through weakness, but not weakness of will, otherwise He would not have endured the cross. His motives were frequently to please His Father, they were never suspect. Why then should ours be at best frequently suspect? If this is so, then we are not in the spirit and we are not walking by the Spirit..." This writer then continues on another point: - "Brother Harold says of Jesus, 'His mission the first time was to take away the sins of the world for those who look to Him as Saviour and Friend'," it is not what we teach for it leaves out the great love and mercy of God in providing His own Son to take away the Sin (singular) of the world - it was not dependant on certain ones to look to Him as Saviour and Friend - this was to be after enlightenment and faith - but the sacrifice of Christ was supreme, unconditional - it gave natural existence to all - "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We must always regard the Federal Principle in these matters...."

Another correspondent writes: "In all I have read of the "Glad Tidings" and the "Christadelphian Magazine" that friends have sent me, I have found only one time in each that anything was contrary to scriptures, while the B.A.S.F. is definitely against the Word of God... Could it be that contrary to that Statement some have their own opinions and do not believe it.... and many do not realise what it says. There is a need for people to realise that they are part and parcel of that Statement whether or not they believe it..."

And another question arises: "In Brother Harold's exhortation in the February Circular Letter he refers to "the sting of death". Can someone please explain what this "sting" is? From the exhortation I would have thought it was the eternal aspect of death, but in an earlier Circular Letter Brother Parry says there is no such thing as eternal death. I am confused,"

Yet another question has been posed: "I wonder what others think regarding Jephthah's daughter? Did he really offer her as a burnt sacrifice?"

One final comment: "We are entirely in agreement with Brother Phil Parry regarding the second death. It couldn't be natural death as that was not the penalty of sin, whereas the second death is."

Please keep writing with your answers and queries.

Sincerely your Brother, with Love, in the Master's service, Russell Gregory.

THE USE OF A NAME

A few further thoughts on a name, this time it concerns their use.

Early in the history of Israel as a nation and their journey through the wilderness, they were told concerning God's name, it was not to be lightly used. One of the Ten Commandments concerns the use of God's name as we see in Exodus 20:7,

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Israel, during their wilderness journey and when established as a nation in the land promised to Abraham, received many blessings at the hand of God. It was at such times of plenty with satisfaction that men and women so easily forget their God. Examples abound in the Old Testament where a king or some one in high authority 'waxed fat and prospered' and forgot their God. The writer of the Proverbs prayed that this should never happen in his case. We read in chapter 30 and verses 7 to 9,

"Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, or say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Let's turn now to the New Testament where we have the name of Jesus being used in sincerity and with understanding for good; on the other hand are cases where the name of Jesus is used without faith which brought forth unusual results.

We turn to the Acts of the Apostles chapter 3, recording Peter and John going into the Temple at the hour of prayer. As was customary, many lame and sick people were by the wayside asking for alms, and seeing Peter and John, looked to them to give something. Peter and John saw the man and must have stopped. Can we imagine the lame man's expectation? But 'Sorry, my friend, we have neither silver or gold, but we have something far more precious.' Acts 3:6-8, "Then Peter said. Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I Thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."

The Authorities must have been furious: the priests and Sadducees being grieved laid their hands on them and put them in hold until the next day; then Annas the high priest, and his associates and kindred wanted to know by what power and on whose authority Peter and John had acted, as we see in Acts 4:8 and 10, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them. Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel... be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified... by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

By this time, the Holy Spirit had been received; its power is here seen in conjunction with the use of the name of Jesus Christ through whom it comes. Now let us look at a case where the name of Jesus is misused by those described as vagabond Jews, exorcists who regarded the name of Jesus Christ as merely like most other names. They had neither the knowledge of him; nor the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 19, verses 13 to 16:-

“Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying. We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

Now let us look at the Epistle of James and at chapter 5 where we see the use of the name of Jesus, the Son of God, being used by brethren in association of anointing one who is ill and praying for them. Verses 14 and 15:-

“Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Yes, the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when used faithfully with full knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom has seen the blind given sight, the deaf to hear, and the like. The wonders that have been wrought in the name of Jesus Christ! Isaiah, in his prophecy, tells us in his ninth chapter His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Prince of Peace. Paul and Timothy, when they wrote to the brethren at Philippi, in chapter two and verses 9 to 11 tell us:-

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

How dare any lightly use the name of Jesus? It makes our blood boil, as the saying is, when we hear the name of Jesus being so lightly used by many in these days, in conversation, on the Radio and Television. But for us brethren and sisters, who take on the name of Jesus Christ, a final quotation from John’s Gospel record, chapter 16, verses 23 and 24,

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in .my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Let us then be careful how and what we ask in Jesus’ name; may it be in sincerity and truth.

Brother Harvey Linggood.

“Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:
and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

Proverbs 24:2 & 3.

CHAT SECTION

A Correspondent writes: “Reading through the February C.L. I was interested in what Mona Dawes had to say in her article on Rebekah. Most Bible students believe that Jacob was a supplanter; a deceiver. I cannot understand how the writer could arrive at the understanding that mother and son “discussed a cold plan of deceit,” but I can understand that the blind lead the blind.

It would be wise to take another look at Malachi 1:2 & 3; Romans 9:13; Hebrews 12:16; Jeremiah 49:8; Obadiah 17; Psalm 135:4; Isaiah 41:8 & 44:1. If then deceit was the work of the serpent how could righteousness love unrighteousness?”

In answer to the Brother’s above letter questioning the character of Jacob, and the vicissitudes of his life, we must regard Jacob’s life justified, of course, in the sight of God. Malachi 1:2 & 3, “As it is written, Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.”

Jacob’s name is undoubtedly written in God’s Book of Life. May it be that our names will be there also.

Another Correspondent has a query regarding “Marriage.” Reply as follows:-

I thank the Questioner for the enquiry and welcome an opportunity to answer all questions which concern readers of the Circular Letter, not only on matters of doctrine but “domestic” matters also; problems requiring a sympathetic “ear” - especially among our older readers who may perhaps be living alone.

This Questioner asks, “What is meant “Marrying only in the Lord”? and quotes 1 Corinthians 7:39, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”

The Apostle Paul qualifies to a large extent in the next verse when he says, “But she is happier if she so abide (remain alone), after my judgement: and I think also I have the Spirit of God.” Paul here is in effect saying, ‘If you are committed to a love of God’s Word and are related to Jesus Christ through faith and baptism, and if you are seeking the Kingdom of God and a place therein, then do not commence a new marriage if it will become difficult for you to maintain your faith and commitment, as it may come to a choice between the vital things of the Spirit and your relationship with your new marriage partner.’

Paul does not ask here, “What fellowship has light with darkness?” but he might have done. If, however, a new partner is actively interested, then a decision before marriage to embrace the truth would be desirable. Paul, however, has the humility to not speak by commandment, but rather express his judgement as good fatherly advice. Clearly marriage has enough potential problems without starting out with someone who lacks faith regarding what is to a believer, fundamental and vital matters.

Another important aspect, and so relevant to the subject of marriage, is the question of possible divorce. Jesus recognised that a relationship can irretrievably break down and referred to a Bill of Divorcement. Should those committed to Christ find themselves in such a situation where divorce is unavoidable and necessary, then divorce can take place, but there can be no remarriage for either party* while the other remains alive, as the marriage is still binding in the eyes of God; and what God has joined together let no man break asunder.

Brother Harold Dawson.

***Editor’s note:** This is not the view held by all in the Nazarene Fellowship. Compassion overrules all and if a relationship fails as it did between God and Israel (e.g. Isaiah 50:1) then how can one be so hard upon a wronged person to say that must not find a more suitable companionship with another? Prayer should overrule one’s decision.

Jesus said...

No. 9.

“Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8

The parable of the unjust judge reveals, by use of contrasts, the attitude of God towards our prayers, for all that God is, the judge was not; and all that the judge was, God is not. The judge cared for no one but himself, and in contrast, God’s care and great love for those who come to Him is unbounded. The judge would not listen to the pleas of the widow for justice until she became a nuisance to him. However, God’s desire is that we should follow justice as a way of life, that we may reflect His justness and as His children emulate His Son. “And shall not God avenge (do justice for) His own elect, which cry unto Him day and night, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.”

This story follows on the discourse of Jesus to His disciples regarding His second coming. We read in verse 23 of chapter 17, “And they shall say to you, See here, or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day.” This is the moment we pray for when we say, “They Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” This is the taking away of the elect before the great tribulation, after which the reign of Jesus Christ will begin.

Another contrast dealt with in this parable is that of time, for what is to us a very long time, a time in which we can grow weary, is to God but a moment. It is the reason Jesus told the parable to His disciples as we read in verse 1 of chapter 18, “And He spake a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” for if we faint and grow weary, it is because we do not pray; but if we pray we will not faint or grow weary.

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36.

Sister Evelyn Linggood sent a letter a little while ago, to the “Glad Tidings” magazine regarding an article entitled “The Devil and Temptation” by Peter Egerton in which he states that the “Satan” in Job 1 and 2 were his three friends who came to comfort him. This seemed so ridiculous that she felt she had to demur. Below is the letter and the editor’s reply:

RE: THE DEVIL AND TEMPTATION

I should like to suggest that the conclusion Peter Egerton comes to about the Satan in Job (his article on “The Devil and Temptation”, in Issue 1266) is far from satisfactory. He suggests that the Satan is Job’s three friends, but surely no thinking person who is familiar with the first two chapters of Job will be fobbed off with that idea. They did not appear on the scene until after all the evil had come upon Job, and in any case it must have taken more than a human agency to bring it all about.

I do not believe, any more than Christadelphians do, that the Devil is the fallen angel of popular theology, but God does work through superhuman agencies as well as human ones in the exercise of his will, and it must have been so in this case. God had determined to test the faith of Job in that way, and the agency employed was a Satan or adversary to Job, just as the Angel of death was an Adversary to the Egyptians in the death of their firstborn, or the Angel that stood in the way was an adversary to Balaam’s purpose.

S.E.Linggood, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leics. England

Editor's reply:

There are indeed two views of the precise identity of the Satan in Job, assuming it to be someone or something rather than a supposed supernatural Devil. The first is that suggested by Peter Egerton, that the real opponents of Job were his three "friends" and that they acted as adversaries - the meaning of the Hebrew word which gives us the term "Satan." The second view is that advocated by our correspondent; that God used an angel as an Adversary, so that Job's obedience could be fully tested.

Both views demand that we form a view of the events that would have led up to the time when God was moved to put Job to the test, for the first two chapters of the Book of Job presuppose some earlier happenings. On the one hand, the suggestion is that, in their different locations, Job and his friends (termed "sons of God" in Job 1:6) came to worship God in prayer and that their thoughts about Job caused God to decide to put him to the test. If that was what happened, as Mr. Egerton implied, the test would then have been undertaken by God's angels (see, for example, 42:11).

The other view presupposes a meeting of the angels (who are also called "sons of God", for example in Job 38:7), when one of the angels assumes a challenging role in connection with Job's true motives. There is some support for this view in 1 Kings 22:19-23, when an angel is chosen to go and confuse the false prophets who served the king of Israel. This interpretation of the events then has God entrust Job into the hands of that angel for the purpose of the test, in the sure knowledge that his servant will eventually come through the ordeal, strengthened as a result of the way he had to rethink his life before God.

Both these approaches seem to be viable, and certainly both are to be preferred to any suggestion that God would first discuss his servant with a supernatural being, who was in direct opposition to him, and then hand over Job to such a monster. Bible teaching is strongly opposed to any suggestion that God could ever compromise his holiness, to even look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13), let alone that he would enter into negotiations with the supposed ringleader of all evil and wickedness.

EDITOR (Glad Tidings magazine)

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Chapter Three

ADAM AND JESUS

These are the two Sons of God in a particular manner,' the one, formed direct from the dust of the earth, the other, begotten by Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary.

It is unsafe to strain the scriptures for types and correspondences; such procedure is suggestive of too great an eagerness to sustain some preconceived idea. But to pass over those persons and things, declared by the inspired writers of the New Testament to be types and shadows, would be to neglect a valuable portion of the Word intended for our instruction.

The Apostle Paul has definitely stated that Adam was a figure of Christ, "the figure of Him that was to come." Romans 5:14. Now a figure, as Paul remarks in another place, is not to be taken as "the very image of the thing;" we must not, therefore, look for everything in Adam which we see in Christ, nor for everything in Christ which we see in Adam. This is a little study for the exercise of our discrimination. The object to be aimed at is to regard Adam in his typical capacity as nearly as possible as Paul viewed him. One essential to the attainment of this end is, in our opinion, to keep close to the facts concerning both characters. Inference is not altogether inadmissible in the case but if we can seize upon the facts

themselves, or even the principle part of them and look at them in a clear light, this will be less open to objection than inference, however well grounded it may appear to be.

Adam is presented to us in two phases. His life is divided into two grand periods; the first, the period of innocence; the second, the period of guilt. We might say three instead of two; the third being that period of time after which the Almighty had pardoned his sin and covered him with the "coats of skins."

We now enquire. In which of these did Adam represent Jesus? Luke styles Adam the son of God. This agrees with the account given by Moses, that, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This "living soul" was the first human son of God, of whom the Bible furnishes the record. The phrase, "son of God," seems to imply a resemblance to God; and Adam is declared to have been made after the likeness and image of his Creator.

Thus far the parallel between the two sons of God, that is to say, between the testimony concerning them is sufficiently plain. Jesus was the son of God; and the scripture saith He was the express image of His Father's person. Miraculous powers did not constitute Jesus the Son of Deity. He possessed none of these before His baptism; and it is needless to remark that He obeyed His Father's will as perfectly before as afterwards.

We are viewing Adam and Jesus, for the present, simply in the relation of the type and antitype, as sons of God; and thus far it appears the resemblance is very close. Both receive their life and law direct from the Deity; there is neither difference in character, nor difference in nature. Adam, in the period during which we are now considering him, displayed the glory of his heavenly Father; he obeyed His will; he was endowed with His wisdom; he was a living, tangible reflex of God. But though a created, he was not a begotten son; the reason for this dissimilarity will appear as we proceed.

The gospel of John is remarkable for its wide variation in style from the other three; and one of its peculiarities is the frequency with which we are told that Jesus did not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. There is one observation upon this which every thoughtful reader will, probably, make for himself. The statement seems to imply very clearly that Jesus had a will of His own, and that will would, if followed out, have been contrary to the will of God. What we mean by God's will is the law which God gave to Jesus for His guidance. It is written that "He heard and learned of the Father." By the will of Jesus we mean His natural inclinations as a man. It is recorded that He was tempted in all things like His brethren; and that He suffered, being tempted.

The will of the flesh unrestrained is at variance with the will of God. When checked and guided by the Divine mind, man reflects his Maker. It had been quite as easy for God to constitute man perfect, in the sense of creating him without those propensities and desires which led him to think and act contrary to God's will; but it pleased the Almighty so to frame man, that he might have some share in the work and honour of his own exaltation. This exaltation is primarily the work of God, and without the primary no secondary work of man could avail anything; but in co-operation, the great and glorious end is achieved. It were as unreasonable to overlook or ignore this secondary work, as it were sinful and blasphemous to disregard the primary. On this principle the glory of God is manifest, and also the glory of man. The glory of God is seen in the unspeakable honour and wisdom and riches He deigns to bestow upon the creature, man; the glory of man is seen in his obedience to God.

As respects this matter of will and law, Adam was plainly a figure of Jesus. It is contrary to reason, and contrary to scripture also, to regard the moral condition of Adam and the moral condition of Jesus as being like that generally believed to obtain among the angels. The very constitution of Adam and the purpose of the Most High leave us no doubt that his lot under law was a scene of sharp trial. There must have been times when Adam felt himself much troubled and tempted. He would be sometimes well within the limit, at others dangerously close to it. This is the experience of all men in relation to moral law; whether it be the law of their nature arising out of the moral powers which distinguish them from the beasts, or whether it be a law received from God by revelation. Adam was no exception to "every man

who when he is tempted is drawn away of his own lusts.” To suppose otherwise would be to destroy the main part of God’s scheme, and reduce law and obedience to a mockery.

SIN AND DISOBEDIENCE

The possibility of rendering obedience to Divine law is established from the beginning. It is just as possible for man to obey God now as it was for our first parents to obey Him in the Garden of Eden. The constitution of man is precisely the same now as then; he has no desires now which he had not then, that is to say, he has not lost any of his old or first faculties, neither has he acquired any new ones. If any of his natural appetites, being aroused, are found too strong for him, that is clearly no crime, unless he has the means of altogether avoiding the temptation. If man cannot obey, the law of obedience is a nullity.

A mistake is sometimes made in supposing all sin to be alike. Sins of ignorance are not acts of disobedience; they do not occur from a criminal fault on man’s part. A Jew, for example, might walk over a grave and thereby become legally defiled, but it would be wrong to esteem that a criminal act. If, after the Jew had been made aware of his position, he refused to comply with the law of purification, he would then be a disobedient “person. To set the heinousness of sin in a strong light, the Almighty ordained sacrifices for sins of ignorance, but He did not regard such sins as disobedience.

Sin is defined in the scriptures as “transgression of law.” Sin, then, is transgression. But we have the phrase, “transgression and disobedience.” These are not necessarily the same. The Jew who commits a sin of ignorance is a transgressor in the first sense of the word, but he is not therefore guilty of an act of disobedience. But if, when such transgression comes to his knowledge, he refuses to offer the appointed sacrifice, he is then guilty of a sin of disobedience.

There is no law in the Word of God to punish with death for a sin of ignorance; such law could only come against the ignorant sinner because he refused to recognise such sin when it became known to him, in the appointed way. Though seemingly very simple, this is really a matter of great importance to the Christian, Rightly understood, it shows him plainly that he can keep God’s commandments, and that he need not feel condemned for what he does amiss in the integrity of his heart.

Adam’s sin, in relation to all posterity, may be considered a sin of ignorance; but that sin having been brought to our knowledge, if we refuse to avail ourselves of the only means of atonement, we are guilty of disobedience. As a further confirmation of this view, we may observe that an untrue statement is not inevitably a lie. A lie is an assertion known to the speaker to be false. Ananias told a lie, because he knew that he had sold his land for more than he paid into the common fund. A calm reflection on this subject would be of great service in curbing the tongue, and avoiding the improper application of terms indicative of the gravest sins.

Examples of obedience abound in the Scriptures for our encouragement, just as ensamples of disobedience are given for our warning. The characters who, in Old and New Testament history, have walked righteously before God, not having wilfully and deliberately transgressed His laws, will no doubt shine with the brilliancy of planetary stars in the galaxy of the kingdom of the heavens.

It is not possible to lie, steal, commit adultery, fornication, and murder in ignorance, because these things mean the saying of what we know to be untrue, the doing of what we know to be sinful. With the exception of murder, which appears to be an unpardonable crime, it is not for us to fix the precise limits of the mercy of God. Christ’s advice to Peter; His treatment of him after the apostle had denied Him three times over, and the general examples we have of the long-suffering of the Almighty, leave considerable latitude to hope for the salvation of truly penitent and reformed offenders. But we shall do well to call to remembrance those words of Paul, “What, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?”

Among all the stars the Star of Bethlehem shines the brightest. Jesus rises highest in the scale of Divine law. His obedience was perfect. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Job, Daniel, and John make up a cluster of jewels of rich lustre; but they all pale before “The Mountain of Light,’ the ‘Grand

Kohinoor' of the Almighty's signet. The Divine cutting and polishing of this Gem added flash after flash; and we wait the day when the Foundation Stone of the Fullness of Light shall be set in Zion, the admiration and glory of heaven and earth.

The obedience of Adam was an image of the obedience of Jesus; his physical constitution was identical; his innocence foreshadowed the spotlessness of his great Anti-type; his fatherhood to the human family resembled the new creation out of the "second man," who is now immortal; his act sealed for ever the lot of all his children, in which there is a parallel with regard to the children of Christ; for being in Christ all will be made alive again, for weal or woe, life or death perpetual is the only alternative of this indissoluble bond.

But where shall we find any likeness between these two Sons of God after the transgression of the first? The fruit once tasted, Adam ceases to be an image of Jesus. We look in vain to find one single ray beaming from his face upon the lowly birth-place of God's only begotten Son. He stands awhile in Eden, then cast out, a dark figure clothed with shame, the fit image of the world's toil and grief. The forgiveness of his crime and the hiding of his shame could not restore his original brightness; he had for ever lost his first estate. Had he remained innocent and free, the path of duty would have led him up to a higher heaven, a state from which there is no fall. He would have become consubstantial with the Tree of Life.

LOVE AND DEATH

We tremble before the Almighty's wrath; but it is always pleasing to discover, and to dwell upon, the justice and mercy of His ways. Under the present heading we wish to consider the wisdom and beauty of God's plan in bringing the salvation of our race out of the disobedience of Adam.

Adam was the author of death, but "love is stronger than death." The Almighty so loved the creature of His hand that He would not permit death to devour him from the face of the earth. The creature richly deserved this fate, but God does not delight even in the death of a sinner; "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Human penetration can see no other means of saving mankind besides those devised and employed by the Almighty; but the thought of giving such a Son as Jesus to be cruelly slain for the benefit of the rebellious does not lie within the compass of words fully and worthily to express. The anguish and pity both of the Father and the Son belong rather to the language of sighs and tears.

Unless we suppose the Almighty and Jesus to be devoid of feeling, we may faintly picture the effect of this tragedy of love by calling to mind the near ties that bind us to our own offspring, and them to us. The echoes of the groans and sobs, of the last accents of prayer reverberate from Gethsemane through all the chaos and din of war, and stir the heart-strings of many a yearning soul in this far off time.

The Gospel of John is pre-eminently the Gospel of Love. The same is true also of his Epistles; the word abounds everywhere. The grand theme is the love of God to man through Christ, and the proof of it lies in the unspeakable gift.

It is enlightening and consoling to dwell upon this gift. It implies that Jesus was God's peculiar possession, that He held Him in His own right; that there was no just claim whatever upon Him. Here is seen an all-important difference between Jesus and Adam after transgression. When Adam had sinned he was the servant of sin. In the exact language of Scripture, he was sin's bond slave; he was sin's flesh. This legal bondage of his own contracting made his children captives of sin like himself. It was an immense and awful sale. Henceforth all were "sold under sin;" all rights, honours, titles, and estates were forfeited; the world's master and the heir of life now sunk into the disgrace, poverty, and chains of death. Such, by one simple act, became the legally altered condition of the first man.

Unless this act be clearly understood in its consequence to all mankind it is to no purpose that we discourse upon the love of God in Christ. No ransom can be appreciated by a captive ignorant and

careless of his enthrallment. But where the Scriptures are believed and revered, it is an easy and delightful task to define the way of life.

The utter helplessness of man provoked the deep wisdom and love of God, more particularly we may suppose in regard to the children of Adam. Of these Paul says, they were made “subject to vanity, not willingly;” “death reigned” over them though they “had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.”

All the attributes of God are in perfect harmony with each other. There is no unrighteousness in Him; and His righteousness may be understood by man, for the Apostle saith, it hath been declared; and to declare a matter is to make it plain. “But now the righteousness of God is manifested without the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: being justified by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God? to declare, I say, at this time. His righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Our business is to show to our fellows, not only the justification provided by God in Jesus, but also to demonstrate its justice. It is too general a custom to leave questions of religion unsifted, and resort to the easy method of referring them to the mercy of God. But that faith is very defective which lacks a strong sense of the justice of Jehovah’s ways. It is a clear knowledge of right which confers a feeling of security. The allegation that we rest our faith on Christ, without a good understanding of the redemption in Christ, is not much more satisfactory, in a spiritual sense, than the belief that the earth rests on the back of a tortoise, without enquiring what the tortoise rests on, is satisfactory in a physical sense.

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” This is true in two ways. All sinned in Adam; Paul says, “In whom (that is Adam) all sinned;” and all have sinned by their own voluntary act. The first sin caused all mankind to “come short of the glory of God,” that is, they fail to reach it. To this terrible rule there is no exception, “in Adam all die.” It is not difficult to conceive some individual of this condemned race living according to all the known requirements of God, and it seems sad indeed that such a one should be cut off, as according to this conception he would be, solely for the offence of another; for a fault which we may assume he would not have committed.

But this difficulty is met by “the redemption in Christ Jesus.” As a matter of fact, not of supposition, we see that first of all death reigned supreme. Against this there is no appeal. What can be more evident than that no act of righteousness can subvert this universal decree? The good behaviour of a prisoner cannot commute the just sentence passed upon him. It may appear a great pity that so well behaved a person should be shut up in a cell, and sovereign mercy may grant a reprieve, but unless the good conduct subsequent to imprisonment were previously made a condition of shortening the term of punishment, such a measure would contravene justice. We cannot regard the Judge of all the earth in this light. He sees the end from the beginning, and therefore commits no mistake.

Let us now place the proposed Deliverer in the position contemplated; let Him be, for the moment, one of the “all who sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Now make Him the grand exception to the rule? make Him obedient in all things; is there no difficulty in unerring justice freeing Him from the sentence? Is there no flaw in allowing Him thus to effect His own escape? If we answer No, then it is clear that the law, said to bring death on all, was not fixed and universal. But there is no disputing; the law is couched in language which no honest reader can doubt; it admits of no exception whatsoever; therefore it would not be possible in justice to permit one born a sinner to be his own deliverer.

To spare the Almighty from all liability to the imputation of partiality and injustice in the matter, we have only to look at what He has done. He has devised and carried out a plan which furnishes absolute proof of His righteousness, as well as of His mercy in the work. His mercy shines all the brighter because we see it in the clear light of justice. It is not the kind of mercy through which human judges sometimes

err, under the impression, good enough in itself, that it is better to err, if at all, on the side of mercy. No: the Almighty is most merciful, but He does not err therein.

To be “just and the Justifier” God sent forth His own Son, and commanded Him to give “His life a ransom for all.” No other man could do this because his life was lost in the first transgression, to say nothing of his own voluntary sins. But we may be asked to prove that the life of God’s Son was free from this claim. The same fact which proves that Adam was free from death at first, proves that Jesus was free also. Adam was God’s own child. While he remained obedient he was free from sin, therefore free from death. When he disobeyed he became the child of sin, and ceased to be the child of God.

This change of condition is forcibly set forth in the language of the apostle, “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” The words of the Apostle John agree with those of Paul, and place the subject in a very clear light. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” The language of the epistle is also very pointed, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

Whose sons were these before they became the sons of God? The apostle replies, they were sons of sin. This sonship to sin began in Eden; and purchase began there also. God purchased Adam, or bought him back from sin at the price of blood. The transaction was figurative of the purchase to be effected by the great and precious price, even the life-blood of the Son of God. The freedom of Adam from sin began with his birth, and remained while his obedience lasted. All this time he was “the figure of Him who was to come.”

But Adam was not then a perfect image of all the conditions under which his great antitype was to become the Son of God; still his estate served sufficiently well for a strong type of his successor. The difference was this; Adam was made son of God from the ground; Jesus was the begotten Son by the Holy Spirit from a daughter of Adam. This difference brings us to speak of the reason of the origin of Jesus previously alluded to.

It is important to the correct understanding of the grand scheme of “redemption in Christ Jesus” to apprehend this point without confusion. It has been said that the salvation of man required the Saviour to appear in the nature that transgressed. This is perfectly true; but it does not fully state the necessity of the case. Suppose the Saviour had been formed, as Adam was, from the dust of the ground, the same human, perishable constitution. He would then have been a partaker of the nature that sinned; but though a partaker, or of identical nature He would have had no relation to the race. He would have been a person of precisely the same physical constitution, but the first member of another and entirely distinct family. This is very plainly seen by imagining the first and the second Adam to be made, each from the dust, on the same day. They would be both alike, but without any tie of relationship to each other.

In that case there would have been no bond of brotherhood, no sympathy, no power of deliverance. This is why the Redeemer must take on Him, not only the same nature, but also a blood relation to him who transgressed. This He became by the mother’s side. One of the family of man must be the Redeemer of man. A member of another family or of another nature had no proper connection, and therefore could render no service. The great problem for the solution was. How to produce a branch of the same family, flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone, and yet one able to give his life as a ransom? Profoundest problem! Most glorious solution!

Shall we seek help from a sinner? Shall we place the Deliverer in the death-stricken position of all His brethren? Shall we allow Him to “learn obedience by the things that He suffered,” and then mock Him with the bars of death? May all be spared this awful reflection on the justice of Almighty God.

Most glorious solution! God Himself takes up the case; becomes the Father of another Adam, related to the first by the ties of blood. Hence we behold at once the family relationship and the original

innocence. If this man can sustain purity of character throughout, then give His life as the price of the lost treasure, the plan of salvation from death is clearly shown. All depends upon this. His Father has started Him just where He started the "first man;" will He overcome or will He fall? Thanks be to God, and thanks be to Jesus also. He hath overcome. "He hath prevailed." Never was death so mingled with love and pity, with joy and sorrow, as the death of Jesus. "God loved us while we were yet sinners," "Christ died for the ungodly," "The just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" the blood of the "undefiled, and separate from sinners," became the price of ransom, the fountain to wash and cleanse from sin and all uncleanness. With Paul we may say, "We always triumph in Christ," and that "nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God;" "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

THE HEIR OF ALL THINGS

The doctrine of Divine heirship is a feature in the plan of redemption which well deserves our careful consideration. Paul teaches that in this respect Jesus was superior to the angles. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time. Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to Me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world. He saith. And let all the angels of God worship Him." The pre-eminence of Jesus from His birth is, by this testimony, placed beyond all doubt. Paul had previously stated that Jesus was "made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." This "more excellent name" signified that He was to be the Saviour of the world; it signified that the bearer of it was destined to save the world of mankind from death, which implies that without Him men would in time all perish under the law of sin.

By the Father's side Jesus is heir to the world. He hath given all things into His hand; the uttermost parts of the earth are His. His human relationship to the house of David gives Him a special right and title to the kingdom of Israel. Inheritance among the Jews was not reckoned by the female line. Joseph was of the house of David; and though not the actual father of Jesus, the adopted son born in marriage is heir to the estate of his ancestors.

Jesus was not like Moses, a servant in the house or kingdom; He was a Son over His own house. Adam was at the first in a similar position. He was God's son; heir to eternal life and the inheritance of the world. All his descendants were put out of the heirship with him by his fault. His children occupy the degraded position of the children of a nobleman who by treason has lost his estate. Though the heir pursue the most reputable course of conduct, nothing can make reparation nothing he can do can put the estate in his possession. We have many instances of this in history. The loss of Eden and the introduction of death is a parallel case, and the lot of the descendants of Adam had been hard indeed without the rich provision in Christ. He forms the bright side of the dark cloud. But if we suppose Him to have been in the same condition as they, then the cloud is all dark, not one ray illumines the sad future; the woe is rather augmented by the introduction of a figure so pure and worthy, yet so helpless. And if we imagine the Almighty to be moved to pity at the sight, to restore this Son to the lost estate, we establish an error in Divine justice; in a word, we make the Deity partial and a breaker of His own laws.

These facts and considerations render it imperative that the Heir to the world, the Heir to the throne of Israel, and the Saviour of men, should be a free born Son; and we cannot conceive any other way by which this could be, than by God becoming His Father through the medium of a woman of the fallen family. No man could have discovered this. It was unsearchable? the unsearchable mystery; the hidden wisdom, in which Paul rejoiced that he had so great a knowledge.

The manner in which Jesus spoke of Himself and His authority while on earth is yet another argument in favour of what appears to be a necessity, viz., that He must be like Adam, free born. He held Himself higher than the Mosaic Law. As the disciples passed through the cornfields on the Sabbath day, and plucked the ears of corn, the Pharisees complained. The act of plucking corn was not unlawful for a

Jew, but they alleged it to be a breach of the Sabbath law. Then Jesus spake and said, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath Day." If this had reference only to the future Sabbath of His reign on earth, and not to His superiority to the Jewish law, there would have been no force whatever in the saying; but if the allusion made was to the Mosaic Sabbath, then it gives us very exalted idea of Jesus. The meaning seems to be this - I am now Lord of all; though I do not exercise such authority, I am superior to your law. I am above all things. Could any son of Adam talk after this manner? By no means: that was only proper to the Son of God, "the second Adam; the beginning of the new creation."

The Jews did not understand this. They looked upon Jesus as they looked upon all other men. To them He was Joseph's son; a carpenter, and inhabitant of Nazareth, whence no good had ever emanated, and, in their opinion, never would. They did not recognise His higher rights and privileges; in short, in their eyes Jesus was far inferior to the members of their Sanhedrim. But if we discern these two things, the proper relationship of Jesus to God, to the Adamic family, and the conception the Jews formed of Him, their hostility on the one hand and the exalted demeanour on the other will be more justly understood.

In Peter's address on healing the cripple, he had said to the Jews, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." This informs us that Jesus was, in the days of His flesh, just as much the Prince, or Author of Life, as He was the Holy One and the Just. It should be plain to every one that no person already under sentence of death could be correctly styled the Prince of Life. And when we come to dwell upon the other two titles, "the Holy One and the Just," that is to say, such by pre-eminence, for in all things Jesus had the pre-eminence, it would be equally unreasonable to apply such titles to one who was constituted a sinner by his birth.

That passage of Isaiah, in chapter 9, verse 6, has something in it which tends strongly to corroborate the foregoing remarks: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." Not merely that a child has been born in Israel of kingly race, but that the child born is, in a peculiar manner, "a son given" of God; in other words, the child shall be God's own Sort.

The virginity of the mother of Jesus is a matter of great moment. Had the Almighty's Son been the child of a married wife, as it would appear. He might have been, without any just prejudice, an objection might, and probably would have been raised on all sides. But the well-known respectability and virtue of both Mary and her future husband, Joseph, afford sufficient guarantee for the miraculousness of the conception.

Jesus was quite as much entitled to those high marks of distinction in the flesh as in the spirit. Though not in the actual or full exercise of the prerogatives enumerated by the prophet - Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of the age to come. Prince of peace - He was certainly the elect of them all. And in view of these honours, nay, this equality with God, how can it be imagined that He came into the world a constitutional sinner, "by nature a child of wrath, even as others."

To be continued...