

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 123

May/June 1990

In this Issue:

Page 1. Editorial		Brother Russell Gregory
Page 3, Suffering and Faith		Brother Ernest Brady
Page 5. Jesus said.....	No.11.	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 6. Chat Section		Brother Harold Dawson
Page 7. The Scape-Goat		Brother Phil Parry
Page 10. The Two Sons of God. Chapter Five.		Brother Edward Turney

Editorial

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

There are two reasons for this issue of the Circular Letter being late, and as a consequence have decided it must necessarily cover the months of May and June. The first reason is that I have been away on holiday in Portugal for two weeks enjoying the sunshine and beautiful scenery of the Algarve (Portugal's south coast), where olives, oranges, figs and vines flourish. I have never been to Israel but could not fail to make comparisons with all I have read of the Promised Land. There seems to be a gentleness and peace about the Algarve which makes it very pleasant and relaxing. This is a land which could produce crops in abundance yet the people are poor by our standards; peasants ploughing with donkeys, women carrying bundles of washing on their heads to wash in nearby streams, and fishermen who find it hard to make a reasonable living. The fisherman who took us out one morning was twenty five years of age yet had been working for fifteen years. Though he expects to be a fisherman all his life the catches are less than when he first started fishing and he welcomes the opportunity of taking sightseers out in his boat to supplement his income.

The other reason is that, after being out of work for two years, I have now started a new career. Work and study are taking up much of my time and I would ask you to be patient if the Circular Letters are not as regular in the future as they have been in the past.

From your letters:

Regarding the study notes on the Book of Revelation several of you have written regarding chapter 19 verses 11 to 16, saying the rider can not refer to Elijah and must be Jesus for who else could be described as King of King and Lord of Lords?

Of course Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, however, the rider has put on the vesture bearing this name and so goes forth in the Kings Name. Regarding the Name also on his thigh, this is where the sword is carried when going out to battle and is again referring to the rider's work for his Lord and King.

One correspondent to whom I had written regarding this writes:

"We were inclined to accept your explanation, i.e. that the rider is Elijah, we do not now think so after consideration of what his future role is to be - that of a restorer (Mark 9:12) and converter in Israel (Malachi 4:6), - not a warrior going to war against the kings of the Beast, and considering also Revelation 17:14 the rider and his army can be none other than Christ and the Saints especially so as in chapter 19 the

same description follows on from that of the marriage of the Lamb, verse 21 also of this same chapter applies to Christ. He gives the order - the sword proceeding out of His mouth - and it is carried out,”

In reply I quote from a short article by my father, the late Brother O.E.H.Gregory:

“In The Revelation, chapter 19 verse 11 onwards we read about the one who will ride the white horse whose name is called The Word of God (verse 13). We have now to decide, that as Christ will remain seated at His Father’s right hand until God has made His enemies His footstool, then these judgements will not be personally led by Christ but His Father will appoint angels to carry out the foretold judgements.

As Christ will call His Bride to Himself to meet Him as He comes, then we are obliged to find an answer to the question. Who will pour out the seven last vials? As Christ will remain at His Father’s right hand until He has made Christ’s enemies His footstool then it is reasonable to conclude that Christ - and His Bride will remain in each others company until the Temple mentioned in Ezekiel’s prophecy has been built and is ready for them to occupy.”

In addition I would like to add my own comment, for when God instituted marriage it was intended to be the most satisfying and delightful state in which human beings can live; a relationship intimate and delicate revealing the constant caring love of both partners. Yet how can some say that close to the time of the Marriage of Jesus Christ and His Bride they should indulge in a great slaughter. Such a view is not in keeping with the rest of scripture.

Again, in Deuteronomy 24:5 we read that “When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war...” Can we not see this as a type on the natural plane, while we see Jesus Christ and His Bride as the antitype on the spiritual plane?

I see no place whatsoever for either Jesus Christ or His Bride to kill. The “Jesus said...” article in last month’s Circular Letter also made this point. However, I would like others to express their views and reasons.

With sincere love to all in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Russell Gregory

* * *

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” Matthew 5:44-48.

Suffering And Faith

Pain and suffering are realities which we all have to endure at times. Some sincere believers think that disease is a direct infliction from God, either as a trial of faith or as a punishment for some particular fault. The Apostles write in this way sometimes and there are undeniable recorded instances in scripture where it was so. Similarly there are instances of miraculous healings. But personally I do not believe that there are now many, if any, instances of such direct intervention by God in our everyday life. They may happen, unsought and for our good, or in answer to prayer, but if so they need no other intermediary but Jesus to obtain them. If there appeared to be a direct and immediate connection between say, a prayer and a recovery, there would be no room for faith. Or if an evil deed

or wicked life inevitably produced a fatal disease there would be no unbelievers. These things have happened, but at special times and for a special purpose and they are recorded as such. And we only know they happened because we believe the record God has given us. This makes the distinction between believers and non-believers. If all men could see them happening;’ today there would be no faith.

The power of the Holy Spirit was given to members of the early Church, but it did not enable its possessors to escape completely from the ills which are common to man. When it had served the purpose for which it was given it was withdrawn. Today we are subject to time and chance and there is no direct evidence or visible manifestation of God’s power. If miraculous healings really occurred anywhere in the world today would it not be blazoned everywhere? Instead, all we get is second or third-hand stories of what someone heard of somewhere. The only reason faith-healers can get away with it is the fact that all sick people either get better or stay the same or get worse. If they get better the faith-healer claims success, but if they get no better or get worse the faith-healer blames their lack of faith. To some extent, doctors use the same alibi. If a patient recovers it is due to his skill and medicine - if he gets worse it is because the disease is incurable.

The majority of people today question the very existence of God, but if there were plain evidence of His hand in our daily affairs nobody would be able to doubt His existence. There would then be no virtue or value in the fact that people like ourselves believe in God, believe that He has a purpose and that He is interested and concerned in what is happening. People have always said, in effect, “Give us proof,” “Show us a sign,” and they are still saying it. Those foolish religious people who claim to have the Gifts of the Spirit, to be able to “speak with tongues” are actually doing harm to the cause they think they are serving. God does not give proofs and signs in our day, otherwise He would ruin His own plan.

People say “If there is really a God in Heaven why does He allow wars and other such terrible things to happen.” It is obvious that if He intervened to prevent wars or any other kind of evil His ultimate purpose, which is to separate out a particular kind of people on the principle of faith, would be defeated.

Most of the evil in the world can be attributed to man’s own wickedness but there are also natural catastrophes which man neither causes nor can prevent. We will look at both kinds.

No one would deny that men cause wars and that all the evils and suffering that they bring could be prevented if men would only obey the simple commands not to kill and to love our fellows. Innocent people - millions of them - suffer from man’s inhumanity to man, but it is not reasonable to lay the blame upon God or even to presume to say why or when He ought to intervene to put an end to it. He has created the earth and everything therein very good and has given it into the control of men, who have free-will and could either make it a better place in which to live or, as they are in fact busily doing, a worse place. Can any reasonable being find fault? We have, however, to recognise that there are natural catastrophes like floods and earthquakes which result in suffering. No man can be blamed for these, though often such happenings are known to be recurrent in certain areas of the earth’s surface, and if people acted intelligently they would avoid living in such places. How frequently we hear of a town being rebuilt actually upon the ruins of one destroyed by an earthquake or volcano when the obvious thing to do is to rebuild in a safer place. Even so, no one can be completely safe in a natural creation ruled by natural laws and subject to the chance juxtaposition of circumstances which certainly God could foresee and forestall if He chose but evidently does not. We all heard recently of an unfortunate youth killed by a flash of lightning on the football field; a sad tragedy which in an inquest is called an act of God but which is clearly pure mischance. The fact is that we live in a natural environment, a world in which natural forces operate and can produce geological and climatic conditions which can be catastrophic to the individual or the group but which play an important role in making the earth habitable and beautiful. If supernatural power intervened to smooth out every change of weather or fall of rock or even to save us from the consequences of our own mistakes, life might be less chancy but there would be little room for faith and hope.

The creation of which we form part is for its purpose, very good. Most people testify to this by the reluctance they have to leave it when their time comes; it is not and was not intended to be perfect. As we learn in Romans 8:20-25, the creation was made subject to vanity, or impermanence, not at man's desire but by the Creator. We are in the bondage of corruption so that we may live in hope of deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God in a perfected creation. The Apostle asks, "Does a man hope for that which he already has?" Obviously not. If that which is perfect were already available what would we have to hope for? "But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

The shocking tragedy in 1966 at Aberfan caused many people to question the goodness or the existence of God. They argue that if there is a God He knew it was going to happen and if He is all-powerful He could have prevented it happening. They are right in reasoning thus, but wrong to conclude that we may blame God for the deaths of all those innocent and helpless children. This was an example of a combination of natural forces and human selfishness and neglect producing a calamity which caused untold misery, suffering and sorrow. It was the force of gravity, a law by which a weight will fall or a liquid find the lowest level which brought the flood of slurry into the village. Gravitational force is a law of nature by which the whole universe is sustained and without which we should fly off into space. So it is vital to our very existence. But indirectly it brought about the death of 140 innocent children. Ought God to have suspended the law of gravity to prevent its happening - or changed it so that liquids run uphill instead of down? Or should the village school not have been placed where it was or the Coal Board not tipped its waste material on the mountain side above? Whose is the blame?

It will no doubt be decided that the long spell of exceptionally heavy rain worsened the situation and increased the danger of an avalanche and many people will think that this was a matter requiring the attention of God. But who can tell whether these freak storms which have caused havoc in many parts of the world, notably recently in Italy, are not also the result of man's ignorant interference with nature?

We are all aware of the extent to which the upper atmosphere has been disturbed by mankind. This is where the waters, which were in the beginning divided into the seas and the waters "above the firmament" are stored as the natural supply to water the earth. God is not mocked. Man's proper sphere is the earth and scientists simply do not know what the consequences of their experiments may be or how they may be upsetting the balance of nature.

If a half of the wealth which is being wasted on space research and moon-lunacy was used to feed and house the hungry and cleanse the earth of the filth of past industries instead of adding to the defilement of its soil and the poisoning of its waters, even the catastrophes of nature, unpredictable as they are, might be ameliorated and tragedies such as Aberfan need never occur.

Happily the time is coming when these things will be put to rights by a people with the power, foresight and wisdom to enforce just laws and the reign of peace.

Brother Ernest Brady.

* * *

The above article was written in 1967 while Brother Ernest was recovering from a severe attack of a form of muscular rheumatism, during which time some well-meaning friends sent a faith-healer to him whom he would not, of course, entertain.

Russell.

Jesus said...

No.11.

“Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” (Luke 13:5,6).

The description of the Roman Catholic Church in the Book of Revelation as the Mother of harlots is an apt one for we see her believing a strange mixture of fact and fiction; an enforced “marriage” of truth and falsehood, conjoining genuine and counterfeit teachings.

Her harlot offspring are the Christian denominations and sects. Catholic and Protestant, all expressing some measure of disagreement with the Mother Church; some disposed to express aversion to her teachings, yet all, without exception profess one or more of her false doctrines passed down through the centuries and by these deceive their congregations.

Of these professing Christians Jesus says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity.” (Matthew 7:21-23).

These are they who come in Jesus’ name saying he is the Christ, the anointed of God, yet through their lack of understanding of the Atonement they deceive themselves and others.

They are again referred to in the prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter 16, verse 19, where he writes, “the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.”

The need for knowledge, wisdom and understanding cannot be too strongly stressed for without these we, too, would be deceived.

CHAT SECTION

The following is part of a letter sent by Brother Leo Dreifuss:-

“In the last Circular Letter three questions were asked regarding:

1. The Scapegoat
2. Jephthah’s daughter
3. Cremation

I’m afraid I cannot say anything about 1 and 2. But about cremation. There is no record whatsoever in the Bible about it, only about burial. I think it is undignified just to burn the bodies of our loved ones. But let us bear in mind that God is able to raise anybody to life, no matter what state the body is in. This applies in particular to people whose body has been destroyed beyond recognition in an accident.

Now this raises the question about the burial service. The scriptures contain no record of one. I think the service should be simple. I had to conduct two burial services; one for the late Brother Fred Lea, and the other one more recently, for the late Brother Albert Woodhouse.

I think the following pattern, which I followed in both funerals, is appropriate:

At the deceased’s home

Short silent prayer.

Introduction: purpose of meeting.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35 to 58.

A few remarks about the deceased:

- a) his work
- b) how he came to the Truth
- c) any other details about his personality, etc.
- d) conclusion in silent prayer

At the grave side

Performance of last duty; He/she among those who died in faith not having received the promises, etc, Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18 followed by silent prayer.

Conclude by reading Job 19:25 to 27.

Compiled and edited by Brother Harold Dawson.

The Scape - Goat

I agree with the Sister's comment in the April 1990 Circular Letter that the subject of the Scape-Goat rarely gets a mention in our magazine, but I am sure it has been mentioned by past writers of our Fellowship but it would take me a lot of searching of various writings and a lot of time and energy to find, so I propose with the help of the Holy Word to throw some light and understanding on the two goats presented before the Lord, the one to be slain and the other to remain alive for the purpose of carrying into a place uninhabited, the sins of the people confessed over it, or laid upon it by the High Priest.

There is no doubt in my mind that the two goats have a dual significance yet converge into the one Antitypical offering and Sacrifice of Christ showing both aspects of what was achieved in paying the debt incurred by Adam's sin (natural existence), and also taking away the "sin of the world" (legal position), (Romans 5:15-21). There is no other position than legal to understand Paul's epistle to Romans chapter 5, For example, verse 15, "For if through the offence of one (Adam) many be dead," how can this apply in a physical sense when the only humans existing at the time of the offence were Adam and Eve? No more be said on the matter other than that the law entered that the offence might abound (Edenic offence) - see Romans 5:20, and "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." - see Romans 3:20.

This statement of Paul should therefore introduce us to Leviticus 16 and the subject of the two goats, although its application was to those only under the Law of Moses, yet the lesson to be learned applies to those who are under the Grace and Truth dispensation of Jesus, who was the substance of what the Law foreshadowed in respect of sacrificial blood-shedding for sin.

One important statement from God through Moses, and not directly to Aaron, was to the effect that he could not come "at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat." (Leviticus 16:1,2). Certain conditions were enjoined upon Aaron before he could appear before that which represented God's presence as will be seen if you read on, but the position of Jesus was far above that of Aaron in regard to relationship to God and also approach to God, for he was a son over his own house, but he was not in the capacity of High Priest on earth, yet unlike Aaron he had direct approach to his Father at all times and was never alienated; by reason of his begettal, - he was the son of man in the bosom of the Father - and could declare Him - "I and my Father are one." Aaron was not in such a position, so how dare anyone say Aaron was a type of Jesus the Messiah? Anyone reading Hebrews 9:21-26 will appreciate this fact, and

that as High priest in Heaven at the right hand of God, Jesus cannot, and no longer does, offer his blood, for this he shed once for all men, and intercedes for his own household in the presence of God, and not as Aaron through the patterns of things in the Heavens.

Now in respect of our subject concerning the two goats, Leviticus 16:7, Aaron is to present the two goats before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scape-goat, and the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, Aaron shall offer him up for a sin offering, but the goat on which the lot fell to be the scape goat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scape-goat into the wilderness. By the blood given upon the altar to make atonement Aaron was fitted as High Priest to carry into effect all the rituals of the cleansing, by the sprinkled blood of the bullock for himself and that of the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell for both the tabernacle and for the congregation in order to reconcile the Holy Place the latter having been defiled by the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. In contrast read what is said of Jesus in Hebrews 9:11-15, Jesus entered into Heaven itself by his own blood, not into the figures of Heaven reconciled by typical animal blood.

The method by which Aaron cast lots upon the two goats is of great interest. One writer says, "The Jews inform us that there were two lots, made either of wood, stone, or any kind of metal. On one was written "la-Shem" for the Name, that is, "Jehovah" which the Jews will neither write nor pronounce: - on the other was written la-Azazel," for the Scape-Goat; then they put the two lots into a vessel which is called kalpeh: the goats standing with their faces towards the west. Then the priest came and the goats stood before him, one on the right hand and the other on the left; the kalpeh was then shaken, and the priest put in both hands, and brought out a lot in each - that which was in his right hand he laid on the goat that was on his right; and that in his left hand, he laid upon the goat that was on his left; and according to what was written on the lots, the scape-goat, and the goat for sacrifice were ascertained. The determining this solemn business by lot, the disposal of which is with the Lord, (Proverbs 16:33) shews that God alone was to select and point out the person by whom this great atonement was to be made: hence he says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone elect (that is, chosen by himself) and precious, of infinite value." It is important to note that both goats must be clean and unblemished according to the law of sacrifice, otherwise the casting of lots would have no significance, but as Jesus the antitype, must be seen in both aspects of the goats, both must be of equal efficacy. One animal could not shew both the death and resurrection of Christ, for the goat that was killed could not be made alive. My own view is that the goat that was slain pre-figured the death incurred in Eden and reconciliation to God by a legal cleansing of all things pertaining to approach unto Him.

The Scape-goat shews the aspect of the life which was in the Son of God, John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man."

The two goats were only subject to death through the physical law of their nature this also applied to Jesus, but not to those born of the will of the flesh and in the Adamic line of "the death-by-sin" passed as a sentence; not by a physical law. (Romans 5). It was through faith and the merits of Christ's sacrifice seen in the type, that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day and was glad, and also the certainty of resurrection to everlasting life because Yahweh was not God of the dead but of the living because Abraham was alive unto Him.

Here then is the significance of the two goats. The one slain depicted the natural life lost by Adam through sin and given as a substitute for that temporal life, as this is all he forfeited, being a corruptible creature. Yet the Tree of Life in Eden signified the promise of life everlasting on certain conditions of belief and faith, but Adam lost the right to this and God conferred it on another Son who would delight to do His will so that though paying the debt incurred, the right to life eternal promised to him was not forfeited by sin, but having this life in himself, he was the antitypical scape-goat bearing away into a land un-inhabited the equivalent of all that the priest had confessed over the head of the live goat. Under the Law this was a yearly custom, but when the antitype fulfilled these things it was once for all, and Paul could not have put it better than in Romans 5:8-11, and also Isaiah 53 speaks of Jesus in the experience of

the Scape-Goat “For he was cut off out of the land of the living.” Daniel says, “Messiah was cut off, but not for himself.” Isaiah gives God’s reason, “For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” But Hebrews 9:12-15 gives a very clear explanation. It speaks of Jesus offering himself without spot to God, through the Eternal Spirit, and I believe this to have a dual meaning, firstly in that he was, by begetting of Eternal Spirit, free of Adamic alienation, a position he maintained and therefore could offer himself without fault to God voluntarily, and as the antitype of the two goats, so that God might freely offer him up for us all. On the one hand he was, through death, “a ransom for many,” and on the other hand, “A living Sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to God.”

It would take too much space to dwell on the many aspects of Christ on this them so I will make a few comments regarding the priest sending away the scape-goat by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: the goat bearing upon him all the varied sins and iniquities of the people unto a land not inhabited, or of separation, Leviticus 16:21-26. The margin in the Bible refers to the “fit man” as “a man of opportunity,” and at this stage my mind goes to the man Christ Jesus of whom Peter says, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” 1 Peter 2:24-25. Now at this time it appears all had forsaken him and fled except for some who were prepared to stay and witness the end, among them was Joseph of Arimathea, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just; who had not consented to this evil deed of them, but was for fear of the Jews, a secret disciple of Jesus, and also himself waited for the Kingdom of God. By reading Luke 23:46 to 53 you will learn that Joseph of Arimathea was indeed a “fit man,” “a man of opportunity” who had the influence and faith to go to Pilate and beg the body of Jesus. I do not think he was there by chance but that it was fore-ordained by the Father that no defiled person, Jew or Gentile, should handle His Holy One, and even the place uninhabited, and which never had been, - the place of separation, new and hewn out of the rock was already prepared and awaiting the Antitypical Scape-Goat, out of sight of the people.

Joseph, knowing the law, would have done all that was required, as would Nicodemus, another secret disciple who helped him, and both would have done the required cleansing before returning to the camp. I would not be so presumptuous as to say this is a correct interpretation, some may have a better and more perfect understanding of it/ but nevertheless this would not affect my belief and faith that Christ died for me and that if I associate myself with him by baptism, my “Federal sin” will have been accounted for and laid upon him by the Great God who is the Saviour of all men but especially those that believe.

Bearing in mind Jesus impaled on the tree and reading from Deuteronomy 21:23 where God says of a man that is worthy to be put to death, and is hanged on a tree, is cursed of God. He was to be taken down and buried that day, not left all night, that the land be not defiled. Jesus was not worthy of death himself, but they were, whose sins were laid upon him. If therefore Jesus had not been taken down from the cross at the correct and opportune time by the “man of opportunity,” the sins laid on him would have remained untaken away, and the Lamb of God (= The scape-goat) would not have taken away the sin of the world nor the transgression of those under the Law of Moses. Instead, the land and the people concerned would be defiled and the lifeless body on the tree would of necessity be glorified and received up by virtue of his own individual righteousness despite being left all night on the tree and unburied. The urgency therefore, is paramount “for us,” not “for himself,” as I see it; “This Jesus taken up from you into Heaven,” (by angels) could fulfil some of the things associated with the antitypical scape-goat but difficulties are presented by the facts that Jesus appeared to many of his disciples after his resurrection, nevertheless, though he was said to have died unto Sin, yet he was always alive unto God. See Romans 6:10-14. When the Antitypical Scape-Goat appears to them who are looking for him, it will be without the sin that was laid upon him, for it will be unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Hebrews 9:28; 10:14; 10:18-26.

May these few comments be of some help to us all in appreciating the Great Atoning Work of God in His Son, who loved us and gave himself for us. Love to you all.

Brother Phil Parry.

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Chapter Five

In The Spirit

The import of this phrase, like the import of the phrase “the flesh,” cannot be known by any single rule. It is a form of words peculiar to the sacred writers, and employed by them in a variety of senses. The highest meaning of spirit is God; the lowest perhaps is flesh, described as “a wind,” or spirit, “that passeth away, and cometh not again.”

The Eternal Spirit is imaged to finite minds by those things which, so to speak, are the shadows of Himself; eternal power and wisdom written in letters of fire on the blue arch of heaven, seen and heard in the vastness and roar of the ocean; in the meting out of the earth with His span; in measuring the waters in the hollow of His hand? in weighing the mountains in scales; in reining the winds in His fists; expressed in the present and future of His offspring ordained to rule over all.

On these shadows the human eye can gaze; the human mind meditate; but the Substance hath no man seen, nor can see. He covereth Himself with light as with a garment.

Light obscures light; but the effulgence of Jehovah’s covering is sometimes scarce supportable by man. The seraphic brightness had blinded the returning sinners to Eden’s gate; Moses could but behold “the after glory;” the heart of Israel melted at the base of flashing Sinai; the plains of Dothan were filled with the chariots of fire; the captives of Chebar and of the Aegean isle beheld a man whose aspect was as the sun in meridian splendour; the fire-cloud made the night luminous to the escaped slaves; the Shekinah glowed within the second veil; the dark grave of Jesus shone with lustre from the face of angels, and the transfiguration struck its witnesses to the earth. Such are some of the appearances and the effects of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

There is a sense in which all men, and perhaps all things, are in the Spirit; “for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” He is therefore not far from every one of us. But there are numerous particular and widely differing relationships.

Bad men, as well as good, have served to unfold the future through the prophetic glass. “From the top of the rocks” Balaam saw the future as well as the present fortunes of the Hebrew nation. “From the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” The great King of Babylon “thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God” had wrought toward him. “How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation,

Some of the old seers were in the Spirit in their waking hours; others while in deep sleep; all, except Moses and Jesus, heard the Divine will, and foresaw His purpose in mysterious words and strange imagery; but they talked with Jehovah in plain familiar speech, as a man talketh with his friend, a father with his son.

Spirit envelops the universe; and, controlled by God, sustains it all. But wide indeed is the range. Of things created, the beginning is at those without life; the foundations of the earth: the end or summit the highest mind developed through imperishable substance. Thus, in all things we behold the Creator,) out of whose Spirit all things came. The sea is His; He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. He hanged the earth upon nothing; He bound the waters in the clouds; He hollowed out the depths of the seas; He sprinkled the canopy of night with golden stars, a silent escort to the silver moon. The lilies of the vale offer their sweet and cloudless incense before His throne; the liquid voices of the birds hymn forth His praise. He feeds the ravens when they cry and the beasts of the forest wait on His hand; the hairs of our heads He numbers; and not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. All His works speak His

goodness and declare His glory. A feeling of peace and safety beyond expression dwells in the hearts of those who intelligently and obediently put their trust in Him; such are in the Spirit.

Next to immortality, the superhuman powers of the apostles is the highest phase of spiritual existence. This is in reserve for the saints, together with that life now hid in Christ, and not to be bestowed until His appearing, when the same power will undoubtedly exceed that which was primitively exhibited in earthen vessels. Jesus on earth enjoyed a larger share than His apostles, but even that was limited when compared to His present might, “all power” being given to Him “in heaven and in earth.”

The grand aim of the believer of the Gospel of the kingdom of God is to live in the Spirit now, that he may attain to an abiding place in it at the coming of Him who said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” If we fail in this, all our conceptions, reveries, and reasonings, however accurate and sublime, are no better than intellectual garniture – an elegantly furnished dwelling without an inhabitant, or one whose tenant lies in the embrace of death.

Man is constituted so as to be capable of doing good and honouring his Maker, just as he is capable of everything which is contrary to justice, reason, and propriety. In scripture style these two sides are named the flesh and the spirit, and the best directions are given for the repression of the one and the growth of the other.

When a man has obeyed the gospel, he is no longer in the flesh. A transfer according to Divine law has been made; and it is proper, in speaking of such, to say, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” As a matter of law and right, they are therefore required to display the fruits of the new state into which they have been graciously brought, and to destroy all thorns, briars, and roots of bitterness. The flesh is like a troubled sea, a clouded angry sky, a howling blast. The spirit, an ocean, calm, clear, and deep; an azure sun-lit heaven.

When under the hand of Omnipotence man sprang from the dust of the ground, he was physically in the flesh, but morally in the spirit. Transgression subjected him morally to the flesh. He gratified the flesh and received the wages of sin.

Such by nature, therefore, is the estate of all his children; he sold himself and them. His moral guilt was punished by a physical penalty, which was dischargeable by none save the morally guiltless. Morality rests in law unbroken, and no one on whom the broken law takes hold can effect his own release.

The gospel shews how men in the flesh can be transformed to men in the spirit. This legal change effects nothing as to flesh, that comes in the twinkling of an eye after approval at the judgement-seat of Christ. While in the flesh they are said to be in darkness; in the spirit they are in marvellous light. They are in darkness because under the shadow of death; in light, because in God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all. But this great deliverance leaves their flesh just as it was, because it is only a moral deliverance to end in a literal one; even as the captivity of Adam to sin was at first moral and afterwards literal, depriving him of life.

The great salvation by Christ is seen in the fact that though literally of the flesh. He was always morally “in the Spirit.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Not being born of the will of the flesh, the Christ was never in subjection to the flesh; He was born in the spirit, and walked therein to the end - even to Gethsemane, and after resurrection became spirit, namely, “the Lord the Spirit.”

Spiritually speaking, a man is not “in the flesh” because he is made of flesh, any more than he is spirit, or immortal, because he is “in the Spirit.” Flesh is not an insuperable barrier to a walk in the spirit; but he who “walks in the flesh” is at enmity with Christ, who, though of the flesh, was never “in the flesh.” A correct knowledge of the different scripture uses of these terms, flesh and spirit, is a considerable help to a good understanding of the New Testament epistles.

The Natural Man

The proverbs of Solomon, the Epistles of Paul, and the Discourses of Jesus, depict “the natural man” in every conceivable position and circumstance, presenting a code of moral philosophy attempted by thousands, but equalled by none. The myriad vanities, weaknesses, and follies of mankind, are all sketched and finished with an unerring pencil. From the still, evil thinker; the low whisperer; the loud and constant backbiter; the vain glorious boaster; the self-righteous person; the envious self-consumer; the gross and refined sensualist to the godless moralist; the learned, polished, and abstruse disputer; the devout fanatic; the devouring and pious hypocrite - every mask is torn off, and every line and trait displayed in impartial light.

Man is perhaps more apt to deceive himself than he is to deceive others, and not more in anything than in religious feeling. He bemoans the corruption of his fellows, and corrupts his own mind by the poison of an overweening conceit. The whole world lies in wickedness; there is no justice in the earth; human nature is an evil thing: thus he muses himself into a separate being, and forgets his identity with the common stock. He deplors all carnality except his own; affects a peculiar isolation; sees indefinable danger in the beauties of the natural world; declaims against all knowledge he does not possess, and pretends to pity, if not despise, those who have it.

This mood begets irrational eagerness for universal change, breeds hasty predictions, and brings the crack of doom on every wind.

Such inordinate and morbid piety not infrequently results from a misunderstanding of certain terms of sayings in the Word of God; the very reverence for His Word, in this case, produces much mischief.

“The natural man” is an expression employed by Paul to signify a state of mind in contrast to another state of mind represented by the phrase “the spiritual man.” It is similar in meaning to the words “in the flesh.” The connection in which the apostle uses it serves to illustrate what is to be understood thereby. It will be seen, when we come to consider his illustrations, that, in this sense of the words, “the natural man” is not to be looked for among believers of the gospel, such as are continually desirous to know more of the mind of Christ. He is an entirely different character: one who either refuses altogether to admit scriptural evidence into his reasonings? or, who, on the other hand, while professing to believe such evidence, is never satisfied when it is presented in reply to his demands.

The two are introduced by the following statement:- “For the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.” It is after an elaborate comment upon these, particularly the Greeks, that Paul declares that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The members of the body to whom these words were addressed had, for the most part, been brought over from paganism of the grossest and, at the same time, the most polished kind: for none exceeded the Greeks in profligacy, and none excelled them in poetry, philosophy, oratory, and art. It is their subtle philosophy; their eloquent and refined speech that Paul styles “wisdom” - “the Greeks seek after wisdom.”

When Paul went among them, preaching “Jesus the Christ and Him crucified,” he said in his first Epistle to them afterwards: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.”

“The Greeks,” wrote Seeker, “did not object to the gospel, that the authority of it wanted the proof of signs from heaven, but that the preaching of it wanted the recommendation of what they called “wisdom.” neither the manner of the apostle’s teaching was adorned with that plausible oratory, of which they were so fond; which soothed the ears, and entertained the imagination - which could make a bad cause victorious, and a good one suspected; - nor yet was the matter of his discourse made up of curious speculations; abstruse points in philosophy debated with acuteness; theories built upon slender foundations to great heights, then attacked with subtle objection, and defended with more subtle refinements. These were the delight of the learned Greeks, and agreeable to this was the treatment which they gave the gospel

of Christ. Its doctrines had nothing amusing to minds full of trifling curiosity; its precepts had many things disgusting to human sensuality and pride; its proofs were inconsistent with their prevailing notions. So it was rejected without examination, by persons whom the irony of Job suits perfectly well, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you."

This reception of Paul's gospel by the Greeks accounts for several expressions which occur in those parts of his letter to the Corinthians, in which he describes "the natural man." The great men of those schools were offended and filled with scorn: first, because they could not deny the power of Paul; and secondly, because so marvellous a doctrine was preached to them without the aid of that elegant style, that refined mysticism and endless conjecture, which gratified their taste. The truth of God concerning a sacrificial, a risen, and an immortal Redeemer, came to them in a very humble, plain, and simple dress. This manner of preaching the cross of Christ they called "foolishness." Therefore, Paul makes use of the phrases, "the foolishness of preaching," "the foolishness of God," and so forth, in reply. He repeats their own words in the argument by which he proves that this "foolishness," as they delighted to call it, was wiser than their "wisdom;" this weakness was "stronger" than their strength.

"The natural man" among the Jews was such as hypocritically professed to seek evidence of the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah; asked of Him "a sign," "a sign from heaven;" while in reality they would have been offended at any such grand display of power in His favour, as they demanded. They hated Him because His lowly birth and humble life did not answer to their cherished expectations, and also because of the actual wonders which God did by Him. Their bitterness and hypocrisy reached the greatest height after He had raised Lazarus from the grave; for this act they would gladly have killed Him, and Lazarus also.

Their doings fully justified the withering language which, from time to time, Jesus was incensed to utter; but He knew their thoughts before they brought them forth. The mild, patient, and courteous manner which He adopted to those among them who manifested a desire to understand His doctrine, whether they were His own disciples or not, is a further proof of what we have said, namely, that the "natural man," in the sense of the words now under consideration, is not to be looked for among that class really anxious to know the will of God. Let this be remembered in our daily dealings with opponents, both within and without, and it will give somewhat of that charm and graciousness to our conversation and discourse which made His hearers hang upon His lips.

"The natural man," regarded as an animal existence, has been abundantly proved to be incapable of that middled state imagined by the pagans, fostered in their post-mortem hero-worship, and continued on such an enormous scale by the "Roman Catholic Apostolic Church," more truthfully described in the words of inspiration as the "Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." The whole arcanum of image worship, feasts, fasts, prayers, telling of beads, etc. etc., has this vain imagination, and this only, for its support; and as regards "Protestant England," the doctrine has been said by one of the great lights of her Church to be the lie proclaimed from a thousand high places of our land.

It deprives the gospel of its glad tidings; it makes a mockery of the resurrection of the dead; it blots out the inheritance of the saints; it asserts the dead to be living; it stains eternity with the existence of the wicked; it invents a subterranean torrid zone, and a misty, sleepy dreamland for the "departed;" it incurs an immense expenditure to deceased friends in shrines, prayers, and masses; it deceives more than half the civilized world; and is the strongest of all delusions.

All pious flattery and costly deception is extinguished into rayless night; is hushed into impenetrable silence; is replaced by the bright unfading hope of endless life, where the Scriptures are allowed to "speak freely."

What is man? and to what shall he be likened? The Eternal Spirit answers:

Man is dust, he is like the grass of the field, like a flower cut down, a faded leaf, a passing wind, a dried-up brook, a drop in a bucket, a floating vapour, a span, a potsherd, a thread cut off, a puff of breath, the beasts that perish, a quenched flame, nothing, and less than nothing.

He That is Spiritual

Having briefly considered “the natural man,” we will now take a glance at the spiritual. In many respects he will be found to be the direct opposite; and though not at present the opposite of the natural man in his physical nature, even that will eventually be transformed.

The apostle declares that the spiritual man possesses the great advantage of “judging all things, while he himself is judged of none.” The “all things,” however, judged, or discerned, as the margin puts it, by him, can only relate to such as the apostle speaks of; those, in fact, which “the natural man” is unable to discern. Paul did not teach that because a man is spiritual he is competent to judge in matters of art, science, and letters, but in those things which God has revealed to us in the Scriptures for doctrine and practice.

Neither must it be imagined that there are no degrees in this spiritual judgment or discernment. The shades of difference are as certainly distinct in this matter now, as that there will be gradations of rank in the resurrection state, which differences the apostle illustrates by a beautiful comparison among the stars - “For one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.” The difference of power to form a correct judgment in spiritual things arises from the same causes which enable one to form a judgment superior to another in natural things; namely, higher mental endowments and larger acquirements. No miracle is connected with the work? it is the result of application and honesty of purpose.

There is no branch of knowledge about which men are so vain and assuming as spiritual knowledge, and none in which it is so difficult to give satisfactory proof of what is affirmed. Some pride themselves upon mysterious aid specially sent from God, and persuade themselves that nearly all they know and believe is revealed to them in this way, and that they can at any time command a further revelation by prayer. But the measures taken by the Almighty for the illumination of mankind in regard to His purposes, the command to “search the Scriptures,” and the formation of man’s mind for enquiry and reasoning seem to us a much more reasonable view of the subject. But it must not be supposed that we would speak lightly of prayer.

It would seem that a state of mind is represented in scripture style, by the figure of a man. We have “the old man” and “the new man,” and we are commanded to “put off” the one and to “put on” the other, which expressions at once change the figure of a man into that of a garment.

The same thing is also set forth under the figure of a double man - “the outward man” and “the inward man.” It is presented, too, as a conception. Paul speaks of Christ being “formed” in us.

From these things we obtain the idea that “the spiritual man” is the result of a process, and not of a sudden act or momentary change. He is the subject of growth, not of immediate creation; and his advancement and success depend upon the careful continuance of his culture, just as the vine must be tended and guarded to become fruitful and profitable to man.

The formation of Christ in us is a figurative expression, the meaning of which is obvious enough; but the attainment of the object in all its fullness is exceedingly difficult. It progresses to a comprehensive knowledge of all that pertains to Christ, as taught in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. It includes all the things concerning Himself, as He Himself testified, when going through those writings, to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. This is the first, or intellectual part.

The next is the full formation of the moral character upon His as the model - each man, as far as his own capacity allows, being assimilated to that perfect image. This is a work of great magnitude and merit. It is frequently referred to in the Proverbs of Solomon, and esteemed superior to all other things. Its influence is also great upon others; it moves those who are within observing distance in a subtle and powerful manner; it is a silent monitor and judge, effecting more than lies in the power of words; and, in the end, makes a man’s enemies to be at peace with him.

We ought to be encouraged in our continuance in well doing, by the reflection that the righteous Judge will not measure each merely by the quantity of fruit he produces, but by the circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, under which the fruit has been borne. It would be unreasonable to expect the same quantity and quality of fruit from each of two trees when one was much inferior to the other, or if one was well managed and the other lacked the necessary attention. Thus it is with Christians in different stations of life. A man whose days must needs be spent in a mine, or at a forge, ought not to disturb himself by aspiring to what in his case is impossible. The Judge will not estimate his fruit by the same standard which He will apply to the man of large opportunities. The basis of decision will be upon the proportion of advantages possessed, and the way those advantages have been employed. So that it may turn out in the end that many, to whom little was given, will supersede those who enjoyed much, because they put their little to the better use.

In the fifth chapter of Galatians Paul enumerates two sets of things; the one natural or animal, the other spiritual. He represents the bringing forth of these, which he names "the fruits of the Spirit," as a process not altogether easy, and attended with pain of mind. Before the spiritual can appear, the tendency to natural growth, that is, to the fulfilment of the animal desires, must be checked and subdued. The figure which the apostle employs, in speaking of this, shews at once that it is an arduous task: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." That is to say, they have learned to control their passions and propensities; they have left off the practice of those things which he calls "the works of the flesh/ and then speaks of in detail.

From the first verse of the sixth chapter of Galatians we gather a clear idea of what it is to be spiritual: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." In the twenty-fifth verse of the preceding chapter, Paul speaks of living in the spirit: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

The word spirit is derived from a word which means to breathe. The disciple of Christ professes to be breathing, as it were, not the spirit of the world, but that spirit which condemned the world in the utterances and actions of his Lord. If this is truly the case, he will be found "walking in the Spirit." He will be seen daily exemplifying in his own person, those pure and exalted principles which made Jesus, while on earth, the greatest and best of men. Where those who know what the gospel is, do not walk thus, there the truth is held in unrighteousness; better not to hold it at all. They are threading their way down to an eternal grave, with the lamp of life in their right hand. If we are not walking in the spirit, we are certainly doing what Paul terms "sowing to the flesh." There is no middle or neutral course. We may be sowing to the flesh without an understanding of the gospel, or we may be guilty of the same dereliction of duty with our minds informed. In the first case, we are no better than the beasts that perish; in the second, we are certain to receive a dreadful punishment at the resurrection of the dead, and afterwards to be consigned to what is called in scripture "the second death," which is "everlasting destruction:" "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

We revert for a moment to prayer as a characteristic of spiritual life. "If any of you lack wisdom," the apostle James says, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him." Spiritual knowledge is not to be had merely for the asking. To ask signifies much more than to ask God in prayer. The attainment of this kind of wisdom is made by Solomon a matter of diligent perseverance.

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find knowledge of God."

This process of industrious search for Divine truth is termed asking, and it is rational to believe that those who give themselves to it in faith will be favoured by God with a fair measure of the needful opportunities and means of acquiring it; but to expect the blessing without those endeavours, would be as unreasonable as to expect wages without work.

To be continued...