

“Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest” (Jer. 31:21)

The Living Way

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**Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:
“The Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12)**

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“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat up on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2)

The Two Women of Proverbs

The New Testament describes for our learning two symbolic women: the true ecclesial virgin, and the apostate harlot. So we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 of the concern of Paul regarding the future state of the ecclesia:

“... I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as *a chaste virgin* to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

Paul’s fear was that the pure ecclesial virgin would corrupt herself away from the simplicity that was in Christ—and that did indeed happen. The Apocalypse very graphically depicts this situation, describing how that the virgin had become a whore, or harlot. In Revelation, we read of this second woman:

“... the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, *Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (Rev. 17:4-5).

This mother of harlotry is that great system of apostasy that Messiah will destroy upon his return (Rev. 18:2), but until that time comes, she remains prominent in the earth and so is able to beguile the believers away from the hope that they have in union with Christ.

The book of Proverbs also deals with these 2 women, under the description of the wise woman, and the foolish harlot: we shall consider these in turn.

THE WISE WOMAN

Proverbs chapter 1 begins by introducing us to the cry of Wisdom, personified as a woman:

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the corners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words to you ...” (Prov. 1:20-23).

Sometimes it is said that all we need to have is a simple faith, and that will be sufficient. However, the voice of wisdom says otherwise: we must not “love simplicity,” but seek after wisdom with all of our might. We must receive reproof, and progress from simplicity to wisdom.

Psalm 19 continues this theme, concerning the Word of God:

“the Law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, *making wise the simple*” (Psa. 19:7).

It is the written words and testimonies of Yahweh that can delight the mind of the spirit and impart that wisdom which comes from above:

“the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jas 3:17)

This array of fine attributes is something that only be obtained by constant attention to the Wisdom of the Word of Yahweh, as described within the Holy Writ. But those wise sayings of the Word are not hidden in a corner, or obscured to men of understanding. It is proclaimed to any who might turn from their simplicity and embrace her:

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words ...” (Prov. 1:20-21).

As we have shown in a previous article, we can see in these words a pattern later to be repeated by Messiah, who was the Word Made Flesh (Jno 1:14), and who “of God is *made unto us* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Jesus was “made wisdom” being the embodiment of the principles of the Proverbs, and the other Scriptures likewise.

We can see in the book of Proverbs the basis for many, if not all of the parables of Messiah. For instance, in proclaiming wisdom, we read in Proverbs 9:

“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city ...” (Prov. 9:1-3).

The wise woman therefore, has provided a feast of spiritual delights, upon the basis of sacrifice. In a similar way, we read the parable of the marriage supper:

“the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise ...” (Mat. 22:2-5).

Notice the similarities: there is a feast based on sacrifice, servants are sent out to call men and women to partake of that feast, yet the guests refuse to hear that calling. So we read that:

“when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Mat. 22:7).

And so it is that we read of those who reject Wisdom’s call:

“Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you ...” (Prov. 1:24:27).

Notice that the feast that Wisdom calls us to partake of is, as we said above, based upon the sacrificial slaying of animals. But also, bread and wine:

“Come ye, eat of my **bread**, and drink of the **wine** which I have mingled” (Prov. 9:5).

The eating of bread and the drinking of wine is something we do each Sunday as a token of fellowship, and the memorial of the offering up of our Redeemer who takes away our sins. We see in this simple love-feast, the principles of sacrifice and devotion of labours to the Divine Will. So Messiah said: “Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (Jno. 6:53). Many left him at this point, being unable to receive the things he was saying.

Whilst we are considering Proverbs chapter 9, it is important to notice another aspect to Wisdom: the “way” of understanding:

“Forsake the foolish and live; and go in **the Way** of understanding” (Prov. 9:6).

There are, as Messiah taught in his parable, only two ways that we can walk along: a living narrow way, and a broad way that leads only to death and destruction (see Mat. 7:13). The cry of Wisdom is to forsake the foolish way, and embrace the way of understanding. Consider the following passages:

“I have taught thee in **the way** of wisdom: I have let thee in right paths” (Prov. 4:11)

“Enter not into **the path** of the wicked, and go not in **the way** of evil men” (Prov. 4:14)

“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. ***The way*** of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (Prov. 4:18-19)

The exhortation is very plain: we must decide which path we are on: either the wide way of the wicked, which can only lead to death and destruction, or on the narrow Way of Life which will lead to no other destination than the coming kingdom.

Finally, we need to note that there is a day of opportunity, which is soon to come to an end. There is a day when the voice of wisdom can be heard and heeded, but that day is soon to expire, and then it will be too late:

“Then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” (Prov. 1:28-31).

Just as in the days of Noah, there was opportunity to enter into the ark and be saved, even so there is now an opportunity to embrace the salvation that comes from the offering up of Jesus. And just as that day of opportunity came to an end, when Yahweh shut Noah’s righteous family in, so there is a time of judgment to come, when it will be too late to enter into the antitypical ark.

THE FOOLISH WOMAN

The initial cry of the foolish woman is identical to that of the wise: “whoso is simple, let him turn in hither ...” (Prov. 9:16). In this regard, there are those who therefore cannot tell the difference between the two. Her ways are attractive and palatable to the flesh:

“... the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth smoother than oil” (Prov. 5:3).

But her end is destruction to those who pursue her:

“But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death her steps take hold on hell” (Prov. 5:4-5).

The problem that we are presented with, is that the false harlot is a parody of the true and faithful virgin. The harlot uses the language of the Truth:

“she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows ...” (Prov. 7:13-14).

Notice this: she speaks of peace offerings and the paying of vows, as if she were a true worshiper. This is a characteristic of the Mother and her Harlot daughters of the apocalypse. The false religious system uses the language of the Bible to describe non-Bible ideas. These are but a few examples of this: the Bible uses the word “predestination” to describe the foreknowledge of Yahweh, but Calvinism uses it to describe a theory that denies free-will. The Bible uses the word “devil” to describe a personification of Sin, but the church uses the word to describe a malevolent fallen angel. And the Bible uses the word “soul” to describe the life of a person, but the churches use it to describe an immortal essence that ascends to heaven upon death.

What this means is that when the apostate church uses Bible language, their followers will look at their Bible, and assume that it speaks of the same thing as they. For example, they will look at the fact that the Bible uses the word “devil”, and assume that when the church talks about the “devil” that they are referring to the same thing. So, the language of the Truth is used to describe falsehoods—and thus presents a distorted and truth-denying position to those around us. In this way, the faithful virgin has become an unfaithful prostitute.

According to the Proverbs, this harlot-woman, although she uses religious language, is ignorant of the principles of the Truth:

“a foolish woman is clamorous [i.e. loud]: she is simple, and **knoweth nothing**” (Prov. 9:13).

Israel of old were destroyed for “lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6), and so it is with the Apostate churches. It is not because the availability of knowledge is scarce, rather, they choose to reject it. Hence in chapter 1 of the Proverbs gives the appeal of the faithful virgin:

“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and **ye refused**; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But **ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof** ... for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof” (Prov. 1:23-30).

The Word of God alone is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (1 Tim. 3:16), and we must therefore give it our utmost attention in all humility, that we might eschew folly, and seek that wisdom which comes from above. We have in the book of Proverbs, two women, one wise, and the other foolish. Rather than to refuse true Bible teaching, like the foolish harlot, we must embrace it, and have the humility to be corrected by Wisdom. We must strive to become part of the spiritual Bride of Messiah, keeping ourselves pure and chaste, as we look forward to the wedding, and the marriage supper to follow. Only then will we know to choose the good, and refuse the evil, and be invited to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Christopher Maddocks

Labour Not to be Rich

The Lord Jesus Christ taught a vital truth, which ought to govern our thinking with regard to riches, labour, and the motivating force that drives our labours:

“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Lu. 12:15).

This is the underlying principle of the Proverb that we have taken as our title for this article: “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom” (Prov. 23:4). It is a major theme that runs throughout Scripture like a golden thread: “wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom giveth life to them that have it” (Eccl. 7:12). Material goods do not comprise a man’s life—but wisdom does give life. Wisdom therefore is to be sought after like silver, or hidden treasure (Prov. 2:4) – such is the value placed upon it by those who follow the teaching of Scripture.

Matthew chapter 13 recounts the Master’s parable regarding this situation:

“the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and, buyeth that field” (Mat. 13:44).

Unlike Judas who purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, this man purchases a field in order to obtain the treasure hidden in it. The lesson is plain: we must search out and obtain the hidden treasures of the Word. We shall return to this idea shortly.

LABOUR A CURSE

Genesis chapter 3 recounts the circumstances of Adam and Eve’s fall from a position of favour and grace, where everything they needed was freely provided in the Garden of Eden. Since their expulsion from the garden, a curse was placed upon them:

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:17-19).

We see then, that labour and travail came upon man following his expulsion from the Edenic Paradise. From the moment of man’s birth, till the day of his death, his life is filled with labour. As the Preacher spake:

“this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith” (Eccl. 1:13).

And again:

“Yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail” (Eccl. 4:8).

This last passage demonstrates the vanity of labour in carnal things: the human constitution is never satisfied; there is a constant craving to obtain more and more: “neither is his eye satisfied with riches.” Yet all that can be obtained is lost when the owner thereof descends into the grave:

“As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand” (Eccl. 5:15).

And the Apostle drawing upon this passage expounds the implied exhortation:

“we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:7-8).

Because in the day of our death we can take nothing out of this world, anything we might lay up by way of this world’s goods can have no lasting profit. But the advantage of Wisdom, is that it is able to give life—the Wisdom of the Gospel being able to make a man “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). So the Prophet spake:

“Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isa. 55:1-2).

Here is an ironic situation: men of the world work hard and go to great lengths to earn the riches of this life – yet so few seek after the wisdom that cometh from above. Students attend the serpent’s centres of learning – the colleges and universities that teach human philosophies and wisdom – yet so few engage the Scriptures in their studies. Yet the Bible can give life, whereas the very best of man’s wisdom is temporary, ending with death.

Moreover, men and women who are motivated by money place themselves in a precarious situation: the love of money is stated by the apostle as being a “root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10), “which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”. Again, the vanity of seeking material gain is expressed by the Lord himself:

“... labour not for the meat which perisheth, but of that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you ...” (Jno. 6:27).

Interestingly, in response to this statement, we read on:

“... Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent ...” (vs 28-29).

Here is the point: instead of being covetous, our work is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Psalmist has it: “incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:36). Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), as it places Mammon rather than God as being the focus of our hearts and endeavours.

LABOURING FOR SPIRITUAL FOOD

Rather than to focus our endeavours to obtaining natural food, we must rather concentrate on seeking first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness (Mat. 6:33), and then all these things will be added to us. We still need to labour in natural things – that is the curse upon Adam that we all inherit - yet our earnest endeavours ought not to be in the pursuit of uncertain riches but engaging in matters pertaining to “the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17). We therefore must seek the spiritual food that can nourish us in the ways of Truth and Righteousness:

“as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

And we must progress onto solid food, as we mature in the Truth: “but solid food belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5, see verses 13-14).

There is a vital need then, to labour in spiritual things. Hence Paul exhorts Timothy to give those who do so added respect:

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, ***especially they who labour in the word and doctrine***” (1 Tim. 5:17).

This is why we respect the labours of our earlier brethren, John Thomas and Robert Roberts – not out of any misguided adoration, but rather because they were good Bible students. Hence, according to the Apostle, they ought to be counted worthy of double honour. But labouring in the word and doctrine is not something to be left to the more academically minded; it is a work in which all the called must engage:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15)

This is the work of God, that we might believe – and we can only believe in something that we know about! Hence we must engage much effort in searching out the hidden treasures of the Word, else we will need to be ashamed at the coming of the Lord.

RICHES AND POVERTY

According to Proverbs, “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Prov. 13:7). This is that class of men who suppose “that gain is godliness” (1 Tim. 6:5). They go to great endeavours to make themselves rich in this world’s goods, yet in real terms, have nothing. The ecclesia at Laodicea were like this: they laboured to be rich, and thought they were not needy:

“because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ...” (Rev. 3:17-18).

In this age of spiritual darkness, a person’s status and respect in life is largely determined by his “success” in worldly matters. A person who has a large and luxurious house and an expensive car, and sumptuous raiment, and delightful food is said to be truly successful. But whilst it is not wrong to have riches (indeed, Abraham was a very rich man), we must not trust in them, or keep building bigger barns to accommodate them (cp. Luk. 12:18). Rather, we must use all that we have in the Lord’s service, knowing that our labours in the Lord will not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58).

By contrast, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, as one who was rich, yet became poor, being despised and rejected of men:

“... ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

In the Lord Jesus Christ, we can obtain true riches. He is the one “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). He “was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). And his brethren who lay down their lives in faithful service can be glorified in him (Rom. 8:17).

In conclusion therefore, we find that by seeking after the spiritual food that gives life, the way of the wise is to search after the treasure of knowledge contained within the Word. Showing himself to be a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, (2 Tim. 2:15), the way of the wise is to labour in spiritual things, to lay up treasure in heaven (Lu. 18:22). There are two “ways” before us: the broad way that leads to destruction for those who sow to the flesh, and the narrow way that leads to life for those who sow to the spirit. Which way will we choose? Wisdom is profitable to direct.

Christopher Maddocks

Men: Old and New

Our New Testament readings in Ephesians chapter 3 bring us to consider the way of life that a man must forsake in order to serve Christ:

“If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye ***put off*** concerning the former conversation ***the old man***, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye ***put on the new man***, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:21-24).

There is therefore a new Creation being established by the Lord:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

And this new Creation is brought about by forsaking a previous “old” way of life, and adopting a “new” mindset, which will bring forth “righteousness and true holiness”.

In Colossians chapter 3, it is also written:

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ***ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man***, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:9-10).

These verses illustrate the two personalities which define whether or not an individual is spiritual, or carnal. All of humankind will be categorised by either one or the other—for the most part, the Old man of the flesh, and in the minority, those who desire to “put off” the Old man, and “put on” the New. These become “renewed in knowledge,” being “after the image of him that created him”.

ADAM AND EVE

This reference to bearing the “image” of God brings us back to the Genesis record of the first man. Man was first formed to be in the “image” and “likeness” of his Creator (Gen. 1:26), both in bodily form, and morally. The point in Colossians cited above, is that by being “renewed in knowledge”, and the forsaking of sin, a person can once again show forth the glorious array of Divine attributes of their Creator - and by this means can show forth His moral Likeness. This is what is meant by the figure of putting off certain garments, and the putting on of new.

Interestingly, the Genesis record describes how that the original man put on garments to hide his sin:

“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7).

Here was the putting on of certain garments, in an endeavour to hide a situation of nakedness before God, and to cover up what they had both done. Job alluded to this: “If I **covered** my transgressions **as Adam**, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ...” (Job. 31:33). This was the mind-set of the original “old man”, even the first Adam himself: to try and cover up his evil deeds. But it is also written: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). To obtain mercy therefore, we must not try and cover up our sins, but confess and forsake them – in this way, we can have a conscience that is purged from dead works (Heb. 9:14), and approach our God acceptably and with boldness (Heb. 4:16).

By contrast, in their natural condition both Adam and his wife hid in the shade of the trees (Gen. 3:8) in fear of their Maker, a feature which was new to their experience. But God himself provided a covering for their sin through the abundance of His Mercy: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did Yahweh God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). And this foreshadowed the way in which a covering for sin was provided by a sacrifice acceptable to God. Notice that here, a physical covering was required, that covered their physical nature – and this was the basis for their pardon in the sight of God.

A CHANGE OF GARMENTS

It is written by the inspired Apostle citing the Psalmist:

“David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, **and whose sins are covered**. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:6-8).

Here, a covering = forgiveness. Back in Genesis 3, as we have said, Yahweh himself provided a sacrificial covering for Adam and his wife to wear. This literal covering implies that their sins were covered, and forgiven in the sight of God. But also, it is obvious that in order to wear the skins that Yahweh provided, they would both have to **take off** the old garments of their providing, and **put on** the new, of Yahweh’s providing, as per our readings in Ephesians and Colossians.

In these events, our position is foreshadowed: the old man of the flesh has to be “put off” in order that the new mindset can be “put on”. It is written: “Woe to the rebellious children, saith Yahweh, that take counsel, but not of me; and ***that cover with a covering***, but not of my spirit” (Isa. 30:1). We must not seek to devise a covering to hide our sins before God, for He knows all things and there is nothing that can be hidden from Him (cp. Psa. 139). A coat of skins implies the death/sacrifice of an animal, which points forward to Messiah as being the lamb “without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God” (1 Pet. 1:19-21). In embracing these principles of the Atonement (Hebrew: covering), our Old Man is crucified with him, that the body of sin is rendered impotent (Rom. 6:6), and we will appear blameless with the image of our Creator.

THE NEW MAN

Colossians chapter 3 verse 10 records how we are “renewed in knowledge” after the image of our Maker. This is expressed by the Apostle in other epistles as follows:

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by ***the renewing of your mind***, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God ...” (Rom. 12:2).

“... we faint not; but thou our outward man perish, yet ***the inward man is renewed*** day by day ...” (2 Cor. 4:16)

It is clear from these testimonies, that salvation requires a mental change. Our “mind” needs to be “renewed in knowledge” daily, and this can only be done by the continual study and application of the Word. As Paul expresses it: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ...” (Col. 3:16). Whilst the Bible remains as ink upon the page, it is of little use to us – like the 10 principal commandments given to Moses, engraved in stone. The Word must be engraved in our heart: “ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God: not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor 3:3).

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND

The importance of having a correct mind-set is emphasised by the Apostle, who speaks of two dispositions of thought: one leading to grace and life, and the other to condemnation and death:

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be *carnally minded* is death; but to be *spiritual minded* is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:5-8).

There is a parallel with Colossians chapter 3. Here, the Old Man of the flesh is the “carnal mind”, and the new man a “spiritual mind”. The carnal mind (more accurately “the minding of the flesh”) will lead only to death, whereas the spiritual mind (more accurately, “the minding of the Spirit”) will only lead to life. We must therefore develop a spiritual mind, which can only come into being by a constant application to the Spirit-Word. This is the mind of Christ himself: a mind that we ought to emulate: “... Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ...” (Phil. 2:5).

Possessing a spiritual mind cannot be achieved in an instant. It is something which has to be nurtured and developed through tribulation and trial. There is a constant warfare in the mind between the old, fleshly thinking, and the new, spiritual mode of thought:

“This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:16-17).

The Apostle Paul recognised this struggle within himself:

“... I see another law in my members, *warring* against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23).

But then he also recognised the power of God to save:

“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 7:24-25).

This struggle between the carnal and spiritual elements within our thinking is acutely recognised by those whose heart is set on spiritual things. Indeed, if we do not recognise the struggle in ourselves, it could well be because there is actually no struggle—we are wholly dominated by fleshly thinking to such an extent that the spirit-mind cannot develop, and is instead crowded out by the cares of this life.

THE NEW CREATION

Those who seek to develop spiritually, are said to have been “born again” (Jno. 3:3). They are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). They are therefore members of a New Creation which commenced with Christ, the firstborn of the dead, the Word “made flesh”. Returning back to Colossians, we read that:

“He is the head of the body, the ecclesia: ***who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;*** that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18).

Messiah himself is the beginning of a new Creation, and those who follow him are likewise members of that Creation. So, as we cited earlier, it is written:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new ...” (2 Cor. 5:17).

There is a need to forsake the old, and embrace the new. As the Lord taught:

“no man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved” (Mat. 9:16-17).

We must therefore not try to patch up the old garments, but put on the new, with an entirely new mindset and outlook on life.

THE NEW MAN CANNOT SIN

The apostle John describes the New Man thus:

“Whosoever is born of God ***doth not commit sin;*** for his seed remaineth in him: and he ***cannot sin,*** because he is born of God” (1 Jno. 3:9).

The question arises: How can it be said that we “cannot sin,” when in actual fact not only can we sin, but we do sin every day? A suggested answer is that when we sin, it is not the New Man that sins: rather it is the Old Man rearing his head once more. The New Man is born of God, and he cannot sin, but the Old Man is born of the flesh, and it is this part of our personality that sins and commits iniquity—hence the internal struggle referred to above: the flesh against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. As Paul described his own experience:

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7: see verses 7-25).

When we come to consider the sacrifice of Christ, we see how Messiah put to death every temptation to sin. Never permitting the carnal mind to develop, he showed forth a spiritual mind in all things. As the Firstborn from the dead, he is the beginning of a New Creation, and we who seek to participate in his sacrifice must seek to crucify the flesh, and nurture the spirit within ourselves:

“knowing this, that ***our old man is crucified with him***, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin ... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom. 6:6-8).

Colossians chapter 3 speaks of the aspirations of the faithful:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ***For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*** When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:1-4)

Putting to death the Old man of the flesh is a daily effort, as the Apostle said: “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). We must set our minds on heavenly things, seeking after spiritual things. There is no discharge in this warfare (Eccl. 8:8): there are no holidays, or days off in our warfare of faith. Let us therefore fight the good fight with renewed vigour, so that when our Master comes, he might identify himself within us, the “image” of one who overcame, the Mind of Christ himself. And seeing in us something worthy of perpetuation into immortality, we might be changed, in the twinkling of an eye to become partakers of glorious, sinless, divine nature (1 Cor. 15:52).

Christopher Maddocks

Immortality a Conditional Gift to be Bestowed at the Resurrection

It is easy here to realise how unfounded are the popular hopes of salvation **based on “being good,”** as they phrase it. Adam by one offence, and that, too, an offence inspired by the good motive, as men would say, of doing himself good, viz., that he might become wise, and be as the Elohim—by one offence, came under sentence of death. If one offence was fatal in the case of Adam, how can his descendants, laden

with sins, **hope to escape by any amount of poor goodness?** No, no! men must be forgiven and justified before they can be saved: and how they are to attain to this state may be learnt in the teachings of the Apostles—apart from which there is “no hope” (Eph. 2:12).

As it is from the Scriptures alone that we derive any rational account of the present mortal and afflicted condition of mankind, so are they the only source of information concerning our future destiny. Job asks, “If a man die, shall he live again”? This is the question which it is the special function of the Bible to answer. From no other source can we procure an answer. If we speculate upon it as a philosophical problem, we grope in the dark. There is no process in nature from which we can reason on the subject. There is no real parallel to resurrection. A seed deposited in the ground springs again, and renews its existence by the law of its nature. The power to spring again is part of itself. Not so with man. To use the words of Job (chap. 14:7–10): —

“There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But *man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*”

Where is he? The answer is a simple one; he is nowhere. The dust has returned to the earth as it was, and his life-spirit has returned to God who gave it: and though both dust and life continue to exist as separate elements, the *man* who resulted from their organic combination has ceased to be; and if he ever “live again,” it will be the result of a fresh effort on the part of Almighty power.

That he will live again, is one of the blessed teachings of the Word of God. “Since by man came death, by man came also *the resurrection of the dead*” (I Cor. 15:21). It was the peculiar mission of Christ to bring this truth to light. He proclaimed himself the “Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25), adding, “He that believeth in me, *though he were dead*, yet shall he live.” He came, not simply to re-infuse spiritual vigour into the deadened moral natures of men, but to open a way of deliverance from the physical law of death which is sweeping them into the grave, and keeping them there. **He came, in fact, to raise the bodies of men—which are the men themselves—from the pit of corruption, and to endow them, if accepted, with incorruptibility and immortality.** Paul says: — “*He will change our vile body*, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Philip. 3:21). This is connected with the resurrection, for Jesus himself says, “This is the Father’s will, which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, *but should raise it up again at the last day*” (John 6:39). Thus, life and immortality are said to have been “brought to light by Jesus Christ, through the Gospel” (II Tim. 1:10). In fact, this very aim of the sacrificial work of Christ, as the Saviour of the world from sin, and as the reconciler of the world to God, from whom all men have gone astray, was to offer men everlasting life. This will appear from the following citations from the New Testament: —

“I am come that *they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10).

God sent His only begotten Son into the world, *that we might live through him*” (I John 4:9).

“Ye will not come to me, *that ye might have life*” (John 5:40).

“I am the resurrection *and the life*” (John 11:25).

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

“Thou (the Father) hast given him (the Son) power over all flesh, that he *should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him*” (John 17:2).

“My sheep hear my voice.... *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*” (John 10:27, 28).

“This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, *and this life is in His Son*” (I John 5:11).

“This is the promise that He hath promised us, *even eternal life*” (I John 2:25).

“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life *through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:23).

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope *of eternal life*” (Titus 3:7).

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ *unto eternal life*” (Jude 21).

There is one obvious reflection on the reading of these passages; if immortality be the natural attribute of every son of Adam from the very moment he breathes, there is little meaning in testimonies which, one and all, speak of immortality as a future contingency, a thing to be sought for, a reward, a thing to be given, a thing brought to light through the gospel, etc. There is complete obscurity in such language if immortality be a natural and present possession. How can a man be promised that which is already his own? The divine promise is that God will award eternal life to those who *seek* for glory, honour, and immortality. This is the strongest proof that human nature knows nothing of immortality at present.

What is this immortality? Modern talk on the subject would lead us to suppose it was a mental quality, like conscience or benevolence—a thing of *spiritual condition*—an essence which is itself without reference to time or space. As death has come to have an artificial theological significance, so immortality itself, the promised gift of God through Jesus Christ, has been frittered away into a metaphysical conception—beyond the comprehension, as it has been placed beyond the practical interest of mankind. Bringing commonsense and Scripture teaching to bear on this point, we find that ***im-mortality is the opposite of mortality***. The one being deathfulness in relation to being, as such, the other is deathlessness in the same relation. Both are terms

definitive of duration rather than of quality, of life, although quality is implied in both cases. A mortal is a creature of terminable existence; an immortal, one so constituted that his life is endless. Yet the terminability of the one, and the endlessness of the other, are the result of the established conditions of their natures respectively. Man is mortal, because his organism tends to decay. If that organism could go on working from year to year, without deterioration or liability to disorder, he would be immortal, apart from violence, because life would be constantly sustained and manifested. But it is not so, as we know to our sorrow; his nature contains within it the seeds of corruption, and hence it runs down to unavertable dissolution. The finest constitution will succumb at last to the gradual exhaustion going on from year to year. To be immortal, **we require to be incorruptible in substance**; because that which is incorruptible cannot decay; and an incorruptible living organism will live forever. Hence the immortality of the New Testament is a promise of resurrection to incorruptible bodily existence.

“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:42–44).

Again (Phil. 3:20, 21): —

“Jesus Christ ... shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

To obtain immortality, is to be transformed from our present weak, frail, **corruptible condition of body, into a perfect, incorruptible, powerful condition**, in which we shall no more be the subjects of weakness, pain, sorrow, and death, but shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ in his present exalted state of existence.

This transformation occurs at the return of Jesus Christ from heaven as is evident from the following testimonies: —

“Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (II Tim. 4:1).

“But every man in his own order (of resurrection): Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (I Cor. 15:23).

“Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:3, 4).

“Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (I Cor. 15:51–54).

From the last testimony, taken along with one from the 4th chapter of I Thess., previously quoted, we learn that the faithful in Christ Jesus who are in the land of the living at the second advent of their Lord and Saviour, will—(after they have been judged)—undergo an immediate **transformation into the incorruptible nature of the spiritual body**, without going through the process of death. Hence the statement “we shall not all sleep.” So that some perhaps now living, like Enoch and Elijah, will be exceptions to the general rule of mortality, and shall not taste of death.

As to the nature of the resurrected body, we find in one of the passages quoted from Paul’s epistles, the words, **“It is raised a spiritual body.”** Some think this means a gaseous, shadowy, spectral body, that a man could drive his hand through. On the contrary, the righteous in the perfected state will be as real and corporeal as mortal men in the present life. We learn this in the most unmistakable manner. Look at the following statements: —“He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). “We know that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). Here is a starting point: Christ is the pattern after which his people are to be fashioned. If, therefore, we would learn knowledge in regard to the nature of the righteous in the future state, we must contemplate the nature of Christ subsequent to his resurrection. We are enabled to do this, because Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, and had several interviews with them. We find him aiming to give evidence to his disciples of **his reality**, when they were terrified by his sudden appearance, thinking him an illusion before their eyes.

He said: —

“Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; *handle me and see*; for a spirit (*Pneuma*, apparition) *hath not* flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb; and *he took it and did eat before them*” (Luke 24:38–43).

Here is positive proof that Christ **was as real and corporeal after his resurrection as he was before. The body that was laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea was the body that afterwards arose and appeared as “the same Jesus”—“I myself”—to the disciples, who handled him, and who ate with him. This is proof that the righteous in the resurrection will be as tangible and bodily as he was then, seeing that they are to be “fashioned like unto his glorious body.”**

It is suggested that Christ’s nature was transformed into intangible essence after his ascension; but there is nothing to support such a suggestion. The supposition is simply gratuitous and undeserving of consideration. It is excluded by the evidence of Christ’s reality and identity after his ascension. Even if this were not so, the suggestion would be without standing ground. Since there is no statement to the effect that Christ ceased to be bodily after his ascension, the only rational alternative would be to assume that no such change took place, and that **Christ remained, and continues to be the same real though glorified personage who exhibited his hands and feet to his assembled**

disciples. But the fact of his bodily continuance is borne out in the statement made by the angels to the disciples, just after the ascension: —

“Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same *Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

What would the disciples understand by “*this same Jesus*”? Would they not think of the blessed Saviour, who, a few days before, had eaten bread in their sight, and said to them, a “spirit (or phantasm) **hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have**”? Undoubtedly; and they would look forward to the time of his re-appearance, with the prints of the nails in his hands, and the mark of the wound in his side, which it is evident, from Zech. 13:6, will be the subject of anxious and interesting curiosity to Jewish beholders at his coming. Therefore, the proof remains that the righteous in the resurrected state will be substantial as their Lord and Master, instead of the bodiless entities generally imagined.

Though not less real than mortal man, the glorified saints will possess a different kind of nature. They are, in the present state, “natural bodies,” but then, they will be “**spiritual bodies**.” Here is the distinction. Natural or animal bodies are sustained in life by the blood, as saith the Scriptures in Leviticus 17:14, “The life of all flesh *is the blood thereof*.” The blood is the medium of animal vitality, with which it becomes charged by the action of the air on the lungs. The life principle or “spirit” is thus applied only in an indirect manner. The blood is proximately the life-giving agent; bodies sustained by it are simply blood bodies. Their life is not inherent; it is dependent on a complex function which is easily interfered with. It is applied by a process so delicate as to be easily marred by external influences and accidental circumstances. Therefore, life is uncertain, and constant health and vigour almost impossible. Our constitutions are easily impaired, and we are liable to be afflicted with distressing infirmities and pains which easily become dangerous: hence the lucrative profession which is accredited with the skill to “cure” unfortunate humanity. Ah, they cannot “cure.” The disease is too deep for their skill. It is in the constitution; it is in the blood; it is deep-grained and incurable. All that the doctor can do is to patch a humanly-unmendable mortality.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only true physician. He offers us **resurrection to spirit-body existence. He promises to fashion us like unto his own glorious body.** He undertakes that though we may be afflicted with all the pains that flesh is heir to in this present life, yea, disfigured by all the distortions of disease; though we may die loathsome deaths and be laid in the grave a mass of festering corruption, we shall be raised to a pure and incorruptible state, in which our bodies shall be “spiritual bodies”; not because ethereal, which is not their characteristic, but because directly energised by the spirit of God, and filled in every atom with the concentrated inextinguishable life-power of God himself. This is the testimony of Christ (John 3:6): “That which is born of Spirit is Spirit.” He had said, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Mortal men and women are born of the flesh; therefore, they are but flesh—a wind that passeth away and cometh not again; but let a man be “born of the spirit,” and he is no longer the frail and perishable offspring of Adam. His corruptible has put on incorruptibility. He is an invincible, all-powerful, immortal son of God. “They are the

children of God,” says Jesus, speaking of the resurrection which is unto life, “*being the children of the resurrection.*”

Paul says (Rom. 8:11), “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken your mortal bodies* by his spirit that dwelleth in you.” Here is a second birth to be effected by the spirit of God; and on the principle laid down by Christ, all who are the subjects of this operation of the spirit upon their mortal bodies, will be **“born of the spirit,” and will, therefore, be “spirit” in nature or “spiritual” bodies—bodies sustained in life by the direct operation of the spirit of life**, without the intermediate mediate agency of the blood—immortal, bloodless embodiments of the spirit of life in flesh and bones, like the Lord Jesus; not pale and ghastly as a human body would be without blood, but beautiful with the electrical radiance of the Spirit which can show colour otherwise than by blood, as witness the jasper and the ruby, and the rainbow. Living by the thorough permeation of the life-spirit in the substance of their natures, they will be glorious and powerful, “pure as the gem, strong as adamant, and incorruptible as gold,” glorious in the sense of physical luminosity, as exemplified in the Lord Jesus when he shone with the lustre of the sun on the mount of transfiguration, and, according as it is written:—

“They that be wise *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, and they that turn many to righteousness *as the stars for ever and ever*” (Dan. 12:3).

Powerful, in the sense of being vigorous and inexhaustible in the power of the faculties, as it is written: —

“The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; *they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint*” (Isa. 40:28–31).

Incorruptible in the sense of being undecaying and imperishable in nature, and therefore entirely free from any liability to pain or disease. In this perfect condition, the righteous will have a boundless eternity before them—everlasting joy upon their heads; no more dullness of mind; no more fretting and heart-failing at the afflictions of mortal life; no more sorrow, no more growing old; no more passing away; but all perfection, harmony unbroken, love unquenchable, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. This will be the happy state of the righteous; this the consummation of that blessed promise, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” (Isa. 25:8).

This precious life and immortality, brought to life by Jesus Christ through the gospel, is not to be indiscriminately bestowed. All men will not attain to it; only a few will be counted worthy. **The precious gift is freely offered to all**; but it is conditional. It is not to be given to the faithless and the impure. Perfection of character must precede perfection of nature. Moral fitness is the indispensable pre-requisite, and God is the

judge and the prescriber of the peculiar moral fitness necessary in the case....

... This completes the sum of what has to be advanced in reference to the conditional nature of immortality, as a **gift to be bestowed at the resurrection**. The proposition is plain, and the evidence conclusive. May it be the happy lot of all who read these pages to inherit the glorious gift.

An extract from “Immortality a Conditional Gift to be Bestowed at the Resurrection” Robert Roberts, “Christendom Astray from the Bible” pp. 93–105

The Sacrifice of Praise

The inspired writer to the Hebrews spoke of the exalted position that we, as Disciples of Christ have:

“we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the Tabernacle...” (Heb. 13:10)

The teaching is plain: whereas the priests and Levites under the Law were given food from the sacrifices that were offered daily, this right gave them no legal entitlement to partake of the Christ-Altar. The Law gave them a legal entitlement to be sustained by the sacrifices – it was their “inheritance” (Josh. 13:14). But in Christ, we find grace and peace, the basis of acceptable offering being the sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart. So Hebrews 13 continues:

“... here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore, let us offer **the sacrifice of praise** to God continually: that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate [fellowship] forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:14-16).

One of the free will offerings under the Law of Moses was known as the sacrifice of Thanksgiving, or Praise. This was a form of Peace Offering – which along with the Passover – the offerer could partake of himself. In essence, it represented a meal of fellowship between the families that made up the people of God, and bound them in fellowship with their God. The allusion in Hebrews 13 is plain; we can partake of the Christ-altar, upon which we offer the Sacrifice of Praise, like the Israelites of old could partake of the food of the Altar offer the Sacrifice of thanksgiving. The difference being, that like the priests (referred to above), the people were given a legal entitlement to the offering, whereas the basis for partaking of the Christ-Altar is faith. The way in which the various types of Peace Offering comprised a meal of fellowship between Israel and their God is seen in the Old Testament account. Leviticus 7 reads:

“the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered ... but if the sacrifice of his offering

be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten” (Lev. 7:15-16)

This verse proves that the offerer ate of the Peace Offerings, being permitted to eat it for a certain number of days, depending on the precise nature of the offerings. Leviticus chapter 3 describes how the particular parts of the animal that comprised the Peace Offering was to be treated:

“And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is *the food* of the offering made by fire unto Yahweh” (Lev. 3:11)

So, the actual flesh of the offering was “the food of the offering”. Additionally, speaking of the house to come, Ezekiel was shown the altar for future sacrifice as “this is *the table* that is before Yahweh” (Ezek. 41:22). The language undoubtedly is that of a meal, the sacrifice being the “food” and the Altar being the “table”. But in this meal, Yahweh was served first: only after the sacrifice was made could the offeror take his share (compare the Law of the “first fruits”).

THE FAMILY OF ELKANAH

In the passing of time, the situation became inverted, with man being served with God’s portion. The first book of Samuel and chapter 1 recounts how a family went up yearly to worship and offer sacrifice to Yahweh. So we read:

“and when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Penninah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters portions: but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah ...” (1 Sam. 1:4-5)

Here is a situation of a family in fellowship, going up to sacrifice and partake of the Peace Offering (how terrible it was then, that at this time of fellowship, Penninah, provoked Hannah to distress and tears because of her lack of children). We find however, that the priesthood had become corrupted to the extent that the priests took meat for themselves, before the sacrifice had been made:

“Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw” (1 Sam. 2:15).

The priests stole that which was Yahweh’s (see also 1Sam. 2:13-14). At this meal, man was served first before God. We might see a similar pattern in the worship of many religious circles of our day. The supremacy of Yahweh is not held with the great reverence that He Requires: man is elevated, and the desires of the flesh are served first, and only when these are accommodated do men turn their attention to the things of the Spirit. Yahweh is a God of convenience, whose function is primarily to rain down blessings upon men, (but also to be blamed when something goes wrong) whosoever they be, and whatsoever ‘faith’ they believe in. Prayers before Him (the fruit of our lips) can become mere shopping lists of those things that we want from

Him – this can happen with our own selves, as well as the apostasy. This, however, is not the Divine Way. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness” (Mat. 6:33) is Christ’s injunction, and serve Him first in all our ways.

KING DAVID

1 Chronicles and chapter 16 recounts king David’s joy at the bringing in of the ark, and also what he did as a consequence:

“when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings, and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh, and he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine” (1 Chron. 16:2-3)

Notice the allusions here to the themes we have been examining: Both burnt and peace offerings were made, and a meal of fellowship was enjoyed. Yahweh was served first in the making of these sacrifices, and the entire Israel of God partook them, recognising that He had given all that they had.

There is another point in this chapter, which links with Hebrews 13, as cited above. Verse 4 of 1 Chronicles 16 reads:

“and he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Yahweh, and to record, ***and to thank and praise Yahweh***, God of Israel ... Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets ***continually*** before the ark of the covenant of God (1 Chron. 16:4,6)

Compare the highlighted words of this quote with Hebrews 13:

“by him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of ***praise*** to God ***continually***, that is, the fruit of our lips, ***giving thanks*** to his Name” (Heb. 13:15)

Then the chapter continues to speak of fellowship:

“to do good and to ***communicate (fellowship)*** forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb.13:16),

The sacrifices that please our Father in this dispensation are not the slaying of animals, but showing forth in prayers and hymns the fruit of our lips. This is what 1 Chron. 16:4 is teaching: those priests who were called upon to minister before the Ark were singers – that which gave God the glory was the fruit of their lips, singing and praising the Elohim of Israel. We would do well to question that which proceeds from our lips: whether what we say is governed by an inward digesting of the Word to the glory of our Father is something only we can say.

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

A principle linked to the concept of fellowship is the importance of meeting the needs of our brethren and sisters. The spirit of this is seen in the example of the Philippian ecclesia: this short epistle brings out many aspects of the Law, by alluding to Old Testament teachings. Philippians chapter 4, and verse 18 reads:

“but I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, and odour of a sweet smell, ***a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God***” (Phil. 4:18).

Notice here, the good deeds in making provision for Paul’s own personal need are likened to a sacrifice: it is a peace offering, a token of fellowship and oneness in the Lord. But what is particularly interesting in this connection, is what the Apostle writes in chapter 2:

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all” (Phil. 2:17)

The marginal reference for “*offered*” indicates that the word is literally “*poured forth*”, as in a drink offering. What a wonderful bringing together of divine principles! The basis for all that we can offer is Messiah’s own sacrifice. He is the Burnt Offering: the entire carcass being consumed upon the altar. The Peace offering was placed on top of the Burnt offering, associating the offerer with that sacrifice, and upon the whole heap, was poured the Drink offering: - Paul is here likening himself to that drink offering, being poured out upon the basis of the Philippian ecclesia’s peace offerings. All were involved in a collective giving (peace offering) to meet Paul’s needs in order to continue his service (drink offering), and such a fellowship reflects the main principles of the Peace Offering.

When we turn to Leviticus 22, we find that imperfections were allowed to be offered as freewill offerings:

“either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything ***superfluous or lacking in his parts***, that thou mayest offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted” (Lev. 22:23)

In this, we behold a gracious accommodation by the Almighty. It is written that despite our imperfections: “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 Jno 1:3). But we are not truly “without blemish”. We have an inward lacking of the things of the Deity, and we find ourselves doing those things that we ought not. We desire to fellowship with our Father and His Son: we seek to offer the sacrifice of praise – not perfect, but nevertheless accepted when offered with the humble and contrite hearts of true believers in Christ. Notice here, that the imperfections were only allowed for a “freewill offering”, but not a “vow”. We suggest that one reason for this, is that when we present ourselves before Yahweh of our “freewill”, (as distinct from obeying a legislation that commands it), He will

recognise and overlook our imperfections. But when we make a vow, there is not to be any deficiency in the payment of it, and neither is there to be any extra: that which is vowed must be paid according to what was originally spoken.

1 CORINTHIANS 10

We began by showing that we have an altar to partake of, to which there is no legal entitlement. But through faith, we are permitted to come to it in order to offer and partake of our peace offerings. In our day, we follow the Apostle's example of breaking bread together each Sunday as a memorial of the offering up of Messiah. This is the antitypical peace offering which was, topped with the meal offering (bread) and drink offering (wine). In this simple feast, we see so many principles converge. Speaking of it, the Apostle wrote:

“the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we all are partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ...” (1 Cor. 10:16-18)

Notice the comparison being made here: Israel could partake of the Sacrifice of Praise, and this eating united them in fellowship. But we are privileged to engage in a different fellowship meal of eating bread and drinking wine - memorialising our Master's sacrifice in the patient waiting for his return. We come together each week to partake of these emblems, which comprise, in effect, our peace offering. Feeding upon spiritual principles, we sing our hymns and offer our prayers to the glory of our Heavenly Father – the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. In the partaking of these emblems of the love of God, we fellowship with each other: - but ultimately our fellowship is with Yahweh and His Son, whose ways we seek to make our own. Truly it is a wonderful thing to fellowship the Great Creator, Who has called us by His grace and mercy. In our fellowship, we recognise our imperfections, which are forgiven us by faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

Christopher Maddocks

COLOSSIANS – AN EXHORTATION FOR UNITY IN LOVE (1)

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

“Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col 3:14,15)

According to Smith’s Bible Dictionary, Colosse was “... a city in the upper part of the basin of the Maender, on one of its affluents, named the Lycus. Hierapolis and Laodicea were in it’s immediate neighbourhood (Col 2:1, 4:13,15,16; see Rev 1:11, 3:14)”. The inhabitants of that place, being but pagan idolaters, indulged in many practices which are abominable in the sight of God, as we learn from Paul’s inspired description of the believers in their unenlightened state: “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry ... in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them” (3:7). And in speaking of their position before the Most High God whilst indulging in this kind of behaviour, he described them as “you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works” (1:21).

But it was to such alienated and wicked men, who were yet dead in their sins (2:13) that the seed of the “word of the truth of the Gospel” was sown by Epaphras (Col 1:7), the founding member of the Ecclesia (4:12). If he were a native of the area, Epaphras would probably have received the word himself from the preaching of Paul in Phrygia (Acts 16:6, 18:23) and brought it back to his hometown for the benefit of those who had ears to hear. Alternatively, he may have been a disciple himself preaching the Word in that area, and upon seeing the response, settled there to strengthen and edify the new ecclesia. But be that as it may, once sown, the seed found good ground in the hearts of those who heard and understood it (Mat 13:23), where it readily germinated and flourished. Whole households were convinced of the Truth – husbands, wives and their children (3:18-21), with masters and their servants (3:22-4:1). The seed quickly took root in them, for the Apostle described how it: “bringeth forth fruit ... since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:6, cp Luke 8:15). So it was, that the Ecclesia at Colosse was comprised of a cross-section of society embracing young and old, male and female, bondslaves and freemen yet all united in a common zeal and enthusiasm for the Truth of the Gospel – all “one in Christ Jesus” (cp Gal 3:28).

THE ECCLESIA IN PHILEMON’S HOUSE?

There is evidence to suggest that these brethren and sisters were those referred to by Paul to Philemon as “the ecclesia in thy house” (Philemon 1:2). The epistle to Philemon was also addressed to a disciple called Archippus (Phil 1:2), who was a member of Colosse Ecclesia (Col 4:17) – but in addition to this, the epistle to Philemon deals with the return of Onesimus, a runaway slave – who also became

a member of the Colossians (Col 4:9). And it is significant that in the latter part of Colossians, Paul was inspired to give specific guidance to both slaves and their masters, and how they ought to behave towards one another. Thus, it would appear, that the Epistle to Philemon was written to exhort Onesimus' master to receive him back – now as a brother – and Colossians follows on from this, providing further guidance when the runaway slave had been reconciled to Philemon, and moreover had been accepted into the Ecclesia, which met in his house.

FAITH AND LOVE

The pre-eminent characteristics of the saints at Colosse which gave rise to so much joy for the Apostle, were faith and love: “We give thanks to God and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints” (1:3-4). These 2 unifying principles of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) are those qualities which bind the many members into a single, united body. Having received the word of Truth, the believers “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (complete) man” (Eph 4:13). And “speaking the Truth in Love”, this “complete man” may “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (Eph 4:15,16 RSV).

It is faith in the revealed Truth of God, that draws men from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances to be gathered together in a common hope. But it is when the individual members have love towards each other, that these believers become tightly bound together, as a single conglomerate Body. So it is, that the apostle exhorted the Colossians: “above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:14), or as the RSV has it, “love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony”. Love is the common “bond” (“a joint tie, i.e. ligament, uniting principle” – Strong) which harmonises everything, uniting all members, as ligaments holding the body together, in a mutual appreciation of things Divine. Thus it is, that the first Chapter of Colossians is devoted to the theme of what we might call, “the united body of Christ” – how the believers have been “delivered ... from the power of darkness, and ... translated into the kingdom of his dear son” in prospect (Col 1:13, cp Rom 4:17), to become united as a single body, in which ultimately, the fullness of God might dwell (Eph 3:19).

But Chapter 2 continues on this theme, emphasizing the completeness of this united body: “in him (that is, Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (v 9). The fullness, or completeness of God dwells in Christ, who is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:3) and we, being baptized into him (v 12) ought also to be complete in him. Nothing else needs to be added, for any deficiency (and there are many) in the constituent members thereof are forgiven, because of the perfection of their Master with whom they are at one, being “knit together in love” (v 2), in a mutual acceptance of the Gospel of Truth.

But there were those who sought to impose the ordinances of the Law to the Gospel. These Judaisers comprised the Apostasy in Paul's day, and sought to add to the Gospel, by imposing a burden which neither they, nor previous generations could not bear (Acts 15:10). Thus, it was, that as the apostle exhorted the Galatians, the believers were to "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1).

THE TRADITIONS OF THE JUDAISERS

Speaking of the doctrines of the Judaisers, the Apostle warned: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (2:8). The fact that what they taught was a "vain deceit", and "the tradition of men" demonstrated the point that what was being added to the Gospel was not even the Mosaic Law, rather a corrupt system of man's making, which passed for it. The Lord Jesus spoke similar words, citing the prophecy of Isaiah: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, for laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men ... full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:6-9). So it was, that these men added to the word of God in two ways, firstly they laid aside and rejected the precepts of the Law, substituting their own traditions in its place, then secondly, they sought to add that pseudo-Law to the Gospel of Christ. How much like the Churches of our day this is – to deny fundamental truths of Scripture, and put in their place the vanities of human philosophy.

But Paul's inspired argument demonstrates that because the Body is Complete in Christ, there is no need for any further addition, whether it be the actual Mosaic Law, or anything else. Being baptized into Christ, the believers are redeemed from the curse which the Law brought, for the Lord has provided a way of forgiveness in, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (2:14). Thus, the exhortation to the Colossians - equally applicable to our circumstance - was: "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus our Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught ..." (Col 2:6-7). We must hold fast to the ways of Truth we have been taught, and let no man beguile us into detracting from, or adding to the revealed Gospel message by the vain philosophies of man.

But vital though the maintenance of pure doctrine is, to merely acknowledge the principles of the Truth is not in itself good enough. Faith, unless it be manifested in works "is dead, being alone" (Jas 2:17). The Way of Life is comprised, not simply of doctrines to be believed, but also principles to be practised in daily life – principles which are enshrined in those doctrines – and this is the theme of the latter part of the Epistle. When we come to a knowledge of the Truth, that knowledge should so influence our outlook in life, that our whole desire is to do what our Lord requires. That desire finds expression, initially in submitting to Baptism, in

enacting our commitment to following the example of our Lord, in crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof (Gal 5:24). In Baptism, we wholly devote ourselves to the Lord as a “living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1), offered upon the foundation of what has already been accomplished in the Christ-altar (Heb 13:10,15) for us. But Baptism is just the beginning. For having risen up from the watery grave, all our inclinations must be heavenward, (cp Eccl 3:21) to the things of God. Thus, the Apostle exhorts: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (3:1). And again, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you ...” (Col 3:5 RSV).

And whilst this seeking of heavenly things is vital for our individual salvation, it is also essential for the spiritual wellbeing of the whole Body. Unless the various members are joined both in their affections and in their implementation of the principles of Scripture in everyday life, they cannot be truly united. And perhaps the greatest test of whether the individual members are truly at one in this regard, is seen not so much in our behaviour and conduct before the unbelievers (important though that be), but in our relations with each other. This is the main thrust of what the Paul teaches in Chapter 3 – to be truly united in fellowship, the believers must not manifest earthly behaviour towards each other, but rather mirror the character of the one they have embraced in baptism: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (3:8-10).

And how much does today’s generation need the wise counsel of the inspired Apostle! “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col 3:13). One often wonders how many difficulties and differences might have been healed simply by a little more forbearance, and a little more forgiveness. The common tendency, in disputes of any kind, is to find fault with the one (or ones) with whom we are at disagreement – and in the case of quarrels between brethren, most commonly over petty matters of minor significance, the natural tendency is to speak of those faults to others, invoking them to “take sides”, if not in the actual debate, in agreeing with our denigration of the other party. Thus, are sown the seeds of discord (Prov 6:19), which fester and grow in men’s hearts, inevitably resulting in divisions and strifes (Jas 4:1), which tear apart the joyful unity previously experienced.

Personal differences of this kind are in an entirely different category to those affronts to the truth caused by the introduction of foreign doctrines and practices being propagated by those who believe another Gospel (Gal 1:6-8). In these cases, the offence is not so much against us, as against the Lord God Himself, His Son, and the Word which they both spake. In this case, the Faith must be earnestly contended for (Jude 3) at all costs.

Any personal differences must take second place, if any place at all in this event, for the contention here is not for self-acquittal, or the condemnation of others – but

the preservation of the Way of Life. But in all other cases, the wise will exercise discretion, manifesting fervent love among themselves, “for love shall cover the multitude of sins” (1Pet 4:8). For the sake of the unity of the body, unless they are of a fundamentally important nature (where different procedures apply Mat 18:15-17) personal differences must be forgotten, however difficult that might be, for love and forgiveness to be exercised, even as Christ forgave us – and let us never forget that “in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6), for “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

We find then, that the Lord’s Epistle through Paul to the Colossians is both highly structured, and progressive. It begins with the believer’s acceptance of the Word, exhorting their separation from the “power of darkness”, in pledging allegiance to a Kingdom yet future. But then it speaks of the ideal unity of the body of Believers, having figuratively died together in Baptism, that they might also live together, striving together in unity and love, for the glorious Hope which they share. It warns them to be on their guard against the addition of the fables of men to the Gospel of Christ, yet exhorts them to allow their common zeal and love for the holy things of God to find the highest expression in their relationships one with another, as brethren of the One who gave his all for their sakes. But for the Body of believers walking as one man along the way of life, there is something yet remaining – the preaching of the Truth to others, that they also might be called out to journey with them to the coming Kingdom.

This is the final exhortation of Chapter 4, an appeal for the believers to pray for a “door of utterance”, that the Gospel might continue to be preached: “Continue in prayer ... praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I might make it manifest, as I ought to speak”. Maybe, this is an aspect of our preaching activities which can so easily be neglected. It is not simply the case that we must preach when the occasion happens to arise – we ought to be actively praying for a door of opportunity to be opened. We should pray for the circumstances in which others might hear the words of Truth being spoken – an activity in which all can be engaged. Though some may be severely hampered by physical infirmities, they are still able to pray. Let them, therefore pray for a door of utterance for others more physically active than they. Let them give encouragement and support to others in whatever small way they can, but let them also pray for the Father’s blessing, that the work of their fellowlabourers might bear fruit – those who do this truly reflect the unity of fellowship.

But in these words of the Apostle, we see the spirit of one who wholly gave himself to the service of Christ, and the ministering to the Body. Despite being in times of immense hardship – “in bonds” for Christ’s sake, his central concern was not upon the restrictions placed upon himself, but rather that being imprisoned, the preaching of the Gospel might be hindered. Even in these straitened circumstances, he recognised that he “ought to speak” the word, whenever the occasion arose, and exhorted the Colossians to pray that such an opportunity may come, as it duly did. Though separated by distance, they were to be united in prayers and thoughts – the true spirit of unity in love.

This then, forms the main theme of Paul's inspired Epistle to the Colossians, an appeal for separation from the world, and harmony amongst the Body, that being so united the believers might seek to draw others into the glorious hope they share. And for all others who also seek to heed this exhortation, there remains the same reward, "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel" (Col 1:5). Let us then, having received the seed of the Word, as did the Colossians, allow it to grow in us, to bring forth fruits pleasing to the Lord, that by His Grace, we might have a hope of a future inheritance in the coming Kingdom of God.

Christopher Maddocks

"... a wise man will hear, and will increase learning" (Prov. 1:5)

The encouragement is to "increase learning", but where from? "The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous..." (Prov.2:6-7). True wisdom can only come from the mouth of the Creator - His Expressed Word (2Tim.3:16, Isa.55:11).

Sometimes it is said that rather than to study, we need to show the principles of the Truth in our daily living. But it is not an either/or situation: both are needful - studying the Word, and applying its principles in life. So Timothy was told: "study to shew thyself approved by God..." (2Tim.2:15). Timothy already knew the First Principles of the Truth: "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2Tim.3:15). But he was to go beyond the milk of the word, to solid food (cp.Heb.5:12,14), like a growing child. Those who are "wise" unto salvation will likewise hear, and "increase learning" in Divine things.

For the faithful, Bible study is not a chore: it gives great enjoyment: "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa.1:2). And again, Paul: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom.7:22). Because those who "wander out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (Prov.21:16), we must immerse ourselves in the wisdom of the Word, learning its principles to receive the "full assurance of understanding" (Col.2:2). Indeed, this is the only way to become and remain "wise unto salvation": trusting in the Word made Flesh (Jno.1:14).

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