

“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)**

Love and Separation	2
Iniquity, Trespass, Transgression and Sin	6
The Epistle of Jesus Christ to the Ephesians	10
The Love of Money	14
Why Use the Father’s Name?	20
“Election Versus Calvinism”	21
Colossians – An Exhortation for Unity in Love (10)	26
Notes on the Book of Revelation (4)	31
The Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ.	37



“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)

Love and Separation

We come together fatigued and perhaps discouraged by our six day's conflict with the present evil world: and we stand in need of the comfort and refreshing and rebuilding which our assembly round the table of the Lord is calculated to afford. We get it best from the Word read and realized. We have this Word in ever-varying forms; the same word in spirit and complexion, but in that variety of aspect and colour that enables us from first day to first day all the year round to feast at this table, on the same things, not only without weariness or sense of monotony, but with an absolutely increasing relish as the time goes on.

Our best plan is to take what is brought before us in the reading of the day. We are sure to get something wholesome and strengthening. We take to-day the sweet words of John, yet taking with them all the surroundings with which he gives them. "Behold," he says, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." It is indeed a wonderful love. There is kindness with some men, and with different men, different forms of kindness. Some give alms: some help with sweet words: some will lend influence and helpful offices: but it is rare to find a man who will lift the object of his benevolence into his own circle and share with him his own privileges. Yet this is what God is doing and offering to do through the gospel. He invites us to be His sons—to become partakers of His own nature—to enjoy His fellowship and the fellowship of His Son. How unlike man! John might well ask us to behold it—to contemplate it—to consider it. The way with men is to keep people down, even though all have an equal right to occupy the best position: but God asks us up to a position to which we have no right.

"WHAT MANNER OF LOVE ..."

"Behold, what manner of love" this is! Why do so few appreciate it, and gladly respond to it by accepting the invitation, and rejoicing in the love and in the goodness of it? There is a reason. There are many reasons, but there is one in particular which John indirectly supplies in his next sentence. "Therefore," he adds, "the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." As there is nothing for which men will work with more enterprise and diligence than to be known of the world—to be recognised—to be thought well of—to be deferred to, so there is nothing that on the common run of men inflicts more pain than to be ignored, and looked down upon. It is here where men are kept away from the truth. The loss of the world's honour is too high a price for them to pay. And nothing more effectually stops the world's honour than the espousal of the truth in its theoretical bearings and practical obligations. Paul and his fellow-apostles were counted "the offscouring of all things." Such sooner or later is the experience of every one who earnestly embraces and faithfully follows the truth which they planted 18 centuries ago. There may be men who know the truth who escape this experience; it must be because they shield themselves from it in ways that will not redound to their honour when Christ comes, such as where a man who keeps the truth in his pocket. There are professors of the truth whom you could not distinguish from the men of the world. In their ways, their practices, their principles of action, they are like those among whom they mingle: you could not discover anything in them of saintship in Christ Jesus. We are not to look to such for guidance. We are to look to

the apostles as exhibited to us in their writings. They and they only illustrate to us the mind of the spirit—the policy and the model that will be acceptable to Christ in the day of his appearing.

In the abstract, it does appear a strange thing that sonship to God should be a reason why the world should disown a man. It is so in fact, and it is so by John's declaration. Perhaps we may discover the reason why it is so, if we reflect; and be thereby helped to take the right position in our day and generation. The habits of men will help us: the case of Christ will put the question beyond all uncertainty. Men love those who love the things they love and hate the things they hate. This is the universal bond of affinity. Now, men of the world love the world: men of God do not: they are forbidden to do so. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jno. 2:15). Because men of God do not love the world, men of the world can have no sympathy with them, and "therefore the world knoweth us not."

MEN OF THE WORLD

Men of the world hate godliness and the things of God. There are no terms too strong by which to express their contempt for them,—"can't," "hypocrisy," "Pharisaism," "humbug," "slobber." Men of God love the things which excite the world's detestation. They obey Paul's command to Timothy: "Flee these things (love of money, foolish and hurtful things greatly prized in the world, etc.), and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience." What communion, therefore, can possibly exist between men who love and men who hate what the word of God enjoins? Men who love what the Word of God enjoins can only have the friendship of those who hate it by hiding their love, or doing violence to it, or worse still, letting it go. It is treading dangerous ground to trim and mince matters to please worldly friends. In fact, it is utterly impossible for a friend of God to have worldly friends. If a man's friendship to God is a reality, the friendship of the world for him will soon die, for the simple reasons already glanced at.

But let us come closer. The case of Christ settles all. If there were a case in which a son of God was likely to be recognised and loved by the world, it was surely in his—a man without fault, a man who went about doing good—a man whose words and works were of themselves sufficient to enchain the general wonder and admiration—who spake as never man spake, and used his wonderful power in deeds of blessing only. But how did his case work out? We know well. The symbols on the table tell us. "He was despised and rejected of men." The world did not love him. The world refused him. "ME IT HATET" Such is his own testimony; and to his disciples he gave this comfort: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Why did the world hate Christ?

We discover the answer when we contemplate the leading mental attribute of Christ as exhibited in his own recorded words. What was that? Was it not this—the fervent and constant recognition of God's existence and prerogatives? What more intense expression could he give to this than when he said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me?" And again, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And again, "I am come down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent me." And

again, "I have manifested Thy Name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world." You cannot touch any part of Christ's life that has not God in it. As Paul said, "For me to live is Christ," so Christ might have said, "For me to live is God." The first commandment of all, according to him, is, accordingly, to love God with all the heart. The God and Father of whom he thus spake is the God who spake to Moses and by all the prophets,—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—the Personal God revealed from the beginning as the Creator, inhabiting eternity, dwelling on high, located in glory in the heavens, yet filling immensity by His spirit.

This is a very different God from the God of modern philosophical and moral discourse. He is not an abstraction, but a Being: not an impassive tendency, impersonal and latent in the universe, but a conscious Intelligence: not a principle, but a person, a Majesty, a Father, the archetype of all personality.

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

The whole history of Israel has this personal God for its moving spring. The whole Mosaic Institution has this idea as its kernel—the *raison d'être* of its existence—the pivot of its operations. All its appointments converge on this idea, —that God is a personal Being to be worshipped and obeyed: a Majesty and a Holiness so ineffable as to demand the utmost abasement, the deepest reverence in all approaches to Him. The God of Israel was the Father of the Lord Jesus; and with Christ, the Father was the one grand governing and overshadowing fact of the universe.

It is here where we understand the hatred shown to Christ by the world. Jesus defines its source in those words of his to the Father, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." Here is the essence of the whole matter. The world knows not God; it is unbelieving of what He has revealed concerning himself; uninterested in the purpose he has formed and announced; and insubordinate towards the expression of His will. It is insubordinate to the point of rebellion. Nothing is so willful as the human heart in un-enlightenment. Paul expresses it strongly, but not too strongly, when he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against thee God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Now the universal human mind is unenlightened. Consequently, it is at the mercy of all the impulses that naturally belong to the human organisation. These impulses make it rebellious against God, whom it knows not; and antagonistic to all who do know him. It sympathises with those only who are in harmony with its own likes and dislikes. This is why it applauds those leaders who flatter it, and minister to it the ideas and principles that are pleasing to its prejudices. Christ did not minister to those prejudices at all. He could not. "I testify of it," he said, "that the works thereof are evil." Therefore, the world hated him.

Now, it is Christ himself who has said that what is true of him in this matter, is true also of his disciples. "Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I have spoken to you, the servant is not greater than his lord." This incompatibility between the world and the brethren of Christ is inevitable. It results from the nature of things. The characteristic of the brethren of Christ is the knowledge and love and

service of God, as Jesus defines it: "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." "He that doeth the will of My Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Such being the moral characteristics of the brethren of Christ, how is it possible that any friendship or sympathy can exist between them and a world, not only totally destitute of those affinities, but distinctly hostile to them? Talk to a Birmingham crowd of God, and our obligations to Him; talk even to the ordinary Birmingham person of such things, and do you not talk a tongue which is worse than unknown—a language resented as outlandish and inimical?

We have had a great stir in Birmingham this last week. You could in no better way judge of the difference between the spirit of the world and the spirit that is of God, than to conceive how the things of God would have sounded in the ears of the populace. Mr. Bright is very popular; because he speaks of the things that appeal to the instincts of the populace. He gives himself out as the friend of the people, and preaches the gospel of cheap bread, which the people understand and delight in. But suppose he were to take the ground that Christ took: suppose he were to tell the people as Jesus told them, that their works were evil (John 7:7); that God was the owner of all things and they ignored Him; that the credit of everything belonged to God and they took it to themselves; that God had spoken, and they took no notice; that He had announced a purpose and they had no interest in it; that He had delivered commandments, and they cast them behind their backs; that He had vouchsafed promises and that they insulted Him by neither caring for them nor believing them: how long would Mr. Bright's popularity last if he employed the great powers God had given him in telling the people these things which are true?

THE BRETHERN NOT OF THE WORLD

Such utterances would be execrated at every gathering of the people, and the utterer would be hounded out of society as an intolerable nuisance. Men, to be popular with the world, must be of the world, and speak in harmony with the world. The brethren of Christ are not of the world, and, therefore, the world hates them, as it hated Christ, and for the same reason. The brethren of Christ are lovers of God, and, therefore, cannot be friends of the world, who are not. They may do the world good, as they have opportunity, but it will be on their own ground as saints, which they would leave at the peril of their friendship with God.

This, then, is the reason why so few accept the glorious rank of sons of God. It brings with it the world's rejection, which is hard to bear. No sane man can find pleasure in the world's scorn, except in the sense in which it is testified of the apostles, that they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. It is crucifying to the natural man to be looked upon as rubbish and rot. But there is another side. There is a future coming along. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, we shall be like him." What a wonderful reversal of affairs this will be, when the poor, and the despised, but faithful friends of Christ and lovers of God are emancipated from the weakness of this corruptible nature, and made glorious, and noble, and immortal, like the Son of God at his return, and exalted to places of honour and power, when the sinners, however mighty, will be put down from their seats everywhere throughout the world. There is not a man of these

arrogant, foul-mouthed men of the present order, but what will want to cringe at the feet of the smallest of Christ's friends in the day of recompense. They will all be eager to serve Christ then: but it will be too late. It is not eye service that Christ appreciates: it is not service for the sake of advantage that he will accept, but a service rendered for love's sake, through the power of enlightenment received and cherished in the day of darkness that prevails in his absence.

This is the service we are united in trying to render. The acceptance of it will be the highest reward it is possible for the imagination to conceive. The hope of it is the most ennobling and purifying power possible to be at work among men. As John here says. "He that hath this hope purifieth himself." This is its intended effect as regards the day of our probation. Christ aims to "redeem us; from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Let us, dear brethren and sisters, yield ourselves to this aim, reciprocally to the will of Christ. Let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Having put our hand to the plough, let us not look back. Let us arm ourselves against all weariness and faintness of mind, and keeping our eye on him who fought the battle before us, who endured a greater contradiction of sinners than will ever fall to our lot, let us run with patience the race set before us, remembering it is a short race at the longest; and that it is a race which, victoriously run, will end in shouts of welcome from myriads of the glorified sons of God.

*Robert Roberts,
The Christadelphian Magazine 1883 page 358–362.*

Iniquity, Trespass, Transgression and Sin

Exodus chapter 34 describes how the glorious attributes of the Father were revealed to Moses:

"Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ..." (Ex. 34:6,7).

In these words, we learn that by His Grace the Father will forgive "iniquity and transgression and sin". These three words, along with another word – "trespass" – are employed by the Spirit to describe various manifestations of Man's fallen condition – words which are often taken to be synonymous with each other, but which in fact, describe different aspects of man's failures in behaviour. In this study, we propose to examine each of these words, in order that we might see the true import of each:

"INIQUITY"

The Hebrew for "iniquity" is 'avon; or 'avown, and is derived from 'avah, which signifies "to crook, literally, or figuratively". The word thus signifies "crooked" in a moral sense, or "perverse" – hence David speaks of "the iniquity of my sin" (Psa.

32:5). It is often used in connection with false worship, or deliberate acts against the laws of God. In Numbers 5:15,31 it is used of sins of a sexual nature, where a wife was suspected to be unfaithful to her husband, and similarly Joshua 22:17 speaks of “the iniquity of Peor.”

The iniquity of Peor is described in Numbers chapter 25, where we read that “the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel.” (Num. 25:1-3).

Here, the people as a nation departed from the worship of Yahweh and turned to idolatry. But mixed in with their false worship was the whoredom that they committed with the Moabitish women – described in Revelation 2:14, as committing “fornication”. Truly, this was a crooked, or iniquitous form of worship, where the people no longer walked uprightly before their Maker.

The word “iniquity” is also used to describe the sins of Eli and his sons, at the time of Samuel:

“I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore have I sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever” (1 Sam. 3:13-14).

Here, the “iniquity” involved corrupting the Tabernacle worship, particularly the offering of sacrifices:

“the priests’ custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither” (1 Sam. 2:13,14).

The priests’ custom, therefore, involved stealing from Yahweh. They stole from the sacrifices and took for themselves more than was allotted to them under the Law of Moses. So the words of rebuke came:

“Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at my offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” (1 Sam. 2:29).

“Iniquity” then, is a form of behaviour which often involves specific corruption of Divine service and worship. And it is associated with taking to oneself that which rightfully belongs to Yahweh, whether it be in terms of sacrifice, or other forms of obedience.

“TRESPASS”

“Trespass” in Scripture involves the infringing of the ‘rights’ of another party. The term is used by Jacob when Laban chased after him, having discovered that his teraphim (a form of Idol) had gone missing, at the same time as Jacob’s departure. Laban searched all of Jacob’s goods, but found nothing. “And Jacob was wroth and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?” (Genesis 31:36). In other words, “What have I done against you, that you come after me so vigorously?”

Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple speaks of the circumstance “if any man trespass against his neighbour ...” (1 Kings 8:31). This again shows that it is something performed against another party. So, under the Law, if a man was found guilty of trespass in a particular matter, he was to restore that which had been taken from his neighbour, plus a fifth: “if a soul sin, and commit a trespass against Yahweh, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered unto him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour ... he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth in the day of his trespass offering” (Lev. 6:1-5).

An interesting feature of this case, is that although the crime is committed against the man’s neighbour, it is considered to be against Yahweh Himself: “If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against Yahweh, and lie unto his neighbour” It was a violation of His Laws; a breach of the conditions of Israel dwelling in the Land—and therefore the trespass was against Yahweh, the Law-giver Himself.

“TRANSGRESSION”

There are two main words rendered “transgression” in the KJV, and both are worthy of our consideration. ‘abar signifies “to cross over,” and is used many times in a context which has nothing to do with sin. But it is also used to describe a crossing over the commandments of Yahweh. As if Yahweh had drawn a line in the sand, so to speak, and men had crossed over that line, when forbidden to do so. The line is Yahweh’s Law, or Covenant: “all Israel have transgressed thy Law” said Daniel (Dan. 9:11). Again, Moses asked, “Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of Yahweh? But it shall not prosper” (Num. 14:41). Saul, in his disobedience in the case of Amelek confessed to having transgressed: “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of Yahweh, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice” (1 Sam. 15:24).

The other word is ‘pesha’ which signifies “to rebel” or “revolt.” So Israel was told that the Angel that went before them would not forgive any rebellion against Yahweh’s words: “he will not pardon your transgressions” (Ex. 23:21). Again, a rebellion against the authority of one’s parents by robbing them, is a transgression: “Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, it is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer” (Prov. 28:24).

“SIN”

In each of the above definitions it will be observed that there is considerable overlap. For example, a single action may be both a trespass and a transgression. But all behaviours which manifest a failing in the sight of the Most High are Sins. Each of the above actions are all described as sins in the verses cited. The word describes a “missing of the mark,” that is, a failure to hit the target of Divine righteousness.

In Judges chapter 20:16, it is said of Benjamin: “among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at a hair breadth and *not miss*”. The word translated “not miss” is a common word for “sin,” being rendered such 188 times in the Old Testament—showing the sense of the word; they did “not miss” the mark.

Romans 3:23 reads: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Again, this describes how all have fallen short of the target of Yahweh’s Glory, rather like an arrow that is fired, that falls short of it’s target. Sin then, is a general term, used to describe any behaviour which does not meet the standard of Divine Righteousness (cp 1Jno 3:4); either missing it, or falling short of it.

But there is another, secondary sense in which the Scriptures use the word “sin”. In Elpis Israel, Bro Thomas writes:

“The word ‘sin’ is used in two principal acceptations in the Scriptures. It signifies in the first place, the transgression of law; and in the next, it represents that physical principle of the animal nature, which is the cause of all its diseases, death, and resolution into dust. It is that in the flesh ‘which has the power of death;’ and it is called ‘sin’, because the development or fixation of this evil in the flesh, was the result of transgression . . . ‘(p.113). “Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean” (p.114).

Again, WH Boulton in his book “The Epistle to the Hebrews” writes:

“Sin is a term of double import in the Scriptures; it has a physical as well as a moral application.” (page 181)

And again:

“No one can read the Epistle to the Romans carefully, and accept its teaching candidly, without realizing that sin is used in reference to something else than action. It is clearly used to define that which is the cause of sin in action.” (page 57)

The allusion of both brethren is to Romans 7, where the very cause within men which gives rise to temptations and acts of disobedience is itself called “sin” – “sin that dwelleth in me” (vs. 17, 20). Here, the “sin” referred to is quite obviously not an actual act of sin, for it is not only said to dwell in the Apostle, it is also described as doing

those things which are against Divine law: “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:20).

This indwelling Sin then, is the principle or “law” (vs 23) of our being which gives rise to thoughts and temptations to disobey Yahweh. Sin dwells within us as a physical law. It is this which has the power of death, for Romans 6:23 informs us that Sin pays death as wages. It is this that was condemned by God in His Son, as it is written:

“What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

The Sin here, which God condemned, is the same Sin that dwelt in the Apostle Paul—the same law which dwells in each one of us. It dwelt in Christ also—for as Bro Thomas rightly shows, it must have been in him, for it to be condemned in him. He bore our sinful flesh with all its desires and temptations. In order for him to be “tempted in all points like as we are” (Heb. 4:15), he had to experience the “lust of the flesh” (cp Gal. 5:16,17), as do we. Yet he was “without sin” in the sense of acts which fall short of Yahweh’s Glory, for he was wholly obedient to His Father in all things. Only he could say: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Jno. 17:4), for only he demonstrated the standard of Yahweh’s Righteousness.

“Sin in the flesh” is the root cause of iniquities, trespasses, transgressions and sins. Jesus never permitted Sin to reign in his members: instead his Father’s Righteousness was declared in him, as the basis for our forgiveness. He, “in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). As the antitypical Scapegoat (Lev. 16:10), he has taken our sins away from us, that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin and death, and be granted a glorious hope of Eternal Life. Let us therefore consider the various manifestations of human failure to glorify the Father – our own failures – and contrast this with the example of the Master. Let us resolve to follow him in crucifying the flesh, that we might be partakers of his victory in the age to come.

Christopher Maddocks

The Epistle of Jesus Christ to the Ephesians

The book of Revelation contains a special blessing to those who heed its message:

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3).

From these words, we find that it is important to “read”, “hear” and “keep” the things contained in the last book of the Bible. To correctly determine the significance of its symbols and figures of speech is important, but it will be to no avail if its lessons go

unheeded, and unkept. We must give all due diligence in trying to understand, in order that we can then translate its principles into action in our daily living.

Our New Testament reading for the day brings our attention to the letters of Messiah to 7 ecclesias. These letters highlight certain strengths and weaknesses of the ecclesias, and provide much exhortation and encouragement to live by the instructions of the Lord. In our considerations today, we shall consider just one of those epistles, namely that written to the ecclesia at Ephesus. And in order to do so, we need firstly to look at the background of this ecclesia, as described in the book of Acts.

BACKGROUND TO THE ECCLESIA AT EPHESUS

The record of Acts chapter 18 describes the visit of Paul to Ephesus, where he “entered the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews, before going “all over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening the disciples”. Then a man came to Ephesus, “a certain Jew named Apollos ... an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). Although he was instructed “in the way of the Lord”, there was a deficiency in his understanding, and so Aquila and Priscilla “took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). He then became a powerful exponent of the Gospel message, as he “mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28).

Acts chapter 19 proceeds to recount the Apostle’s return to Ephesus, where he found others who needed further instruction in Divine things, and he baptised them into the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5). Then “he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (vs. 8). He continued there for two years (vs. 10), “so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (vs. 10). And “so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (vs. 20). But the Apostle’s labourers were not without opposition: Demetrius, a silversmith who made idols of Diana, the Ephesian goddess, realised that he would lose business as a consequence of the city turning away from such idolatry, to trust in the Name of Jesus Christ (vs. 27). He raised up a voice of opposition, the consequence being that “the whole city was filled with confusion”, and an uproar against Paul ensued. In the affray, “when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said: Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image that fell down from Jupiter?” (vs. 35), and with such words “he dismissed the assembly”, and the crowd dispersed.

Acts chapter 20 describes a further visit to Ephesus by Paul, where he warned them of future dangers: “... I know this, that after my parting shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them ...” (Acts 20: see verses 29-30). Notice that here, threats to Ecclesial harmony would come both from external wolves and internal dissenters, and this was something the brethren had to prepare for.

When we come to consider Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, we find a number of related themes. Chapter 2 describes how that whilst Demetrius fashioned idols of Diana’s image, the believers are created by God: “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). And a main theme of the Epistle, is the various

applications of the principles of Love. Chapter 2 again speaks of “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us” (vs. 4). Consider also the following verses:

“... to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God ...” (3:19).

“... that ye, being rooted and grounded in love ...” (3:17)

“... speaking the truth in love ...” (4:15)

“... and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us ...” (5:2)

Two other themes of the letter are the exalted position of the believers, where Jesus “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (2:6), and the need to be children of Light, contending against the works of darkness: “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (5:11).

These principles are brought together in Messiah’s letter to the Ephesians, as recorded by John in Revelation chapter 2.

THE LETTER OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE EPHESIANS

The Epistle begins by approving the Ecclesia for their contending for the faith:

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars ...” (Rev. 2:2).

They evidently had heeded the warnings of Paul regarding the inroads of Apostasy, and were diligent in rejecting the evil, being unable to “bear” them. The word “apostle” literally means “one sent”: there were those who claimed to be sent by God, who in fact, were like the false prophets of old (cp. Eze. 13:6). They were not naively accepted at face value, the ecclesia at Ephesus put them to the proof: they “tried” them and found them wanting. They were “liars”, wolves in sheep’s clothing who sought to destroy and wreak havoc amongst the flock of God.

The Ecclesia did these deeds with good intentions:

“... and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted ...” (vs 3).

They engaged their labours in the Master’s service, for his “name’s sake”. They patiently endured tribulation, and did not faint in adversity having the strength of character (cp. Prov. 24:10) to overcome difficulties for Christ’s sake. Oh that there were more men and women like this in our age! Who earnestly contend for the faith, who uncloak the errorists, proving them to be the liars that they are! But there is always a remnant, a few who hold fast to the Truth in a day of evil.

But the ecclesia at Ephesus also had serious problems:

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love ...” (vs 4).

They had left their “first love”. That is, the love they had at the first – the quality referred to 14 times in Paul’s Epistle to them. Evidently, they tried false apostles more out of hatred for the error, than love for the Truth. They began with a zealous loving spirit, as evidenced in the record of Acts, but as time went on in the Apostle’s absence, their love waxed cold, like those referred to by the Lord (Mat. 24:12).

Solomon describes how that there is “a time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:8) – both features are necessary: we must be like Messiah, in refusing the evil, and choosing the good (cp. Isa. 7:16) The admonition was accordingly given:

“Remember therefore from whence *thou art fallen*, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lampstand out of his place, except thou repent” (vs 5).

We noted above that one of the themes of Paul’s Epistle was how the believers occupied a very high status in the Divine Estimation – in the heavenlies. But in certain regards, the ecclesia had fallen. Like the image that fell down from Jupiter (probably a meteorite), that their fellow countrymen revered, they had fallen down due to their lack of love.

Perhaps this is alluded to in verse 6:

“But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (vs 6).

Their problem was not a hatred of errant behaviour – they shared this with the Lord - but it was rather a lack of a loving motivation to promote the Truth in all it’s positive aspects. Notice, that it was the “deeds” of the Nicolaitanes that were to be hated. Very often, false doctrine goes hand in hand with bad morals and questionable practices. To be faithful in both is essential: “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 Jno. 3:18).

AN ENCOURAGING PROMISE

The deficiencies at Ephesus were serious: if not remedied, they would result in the ecclesial lampstand being removed. But the Lord concludes this Epistle by giving encouragement in providing a vision of the future:

“... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

The word for “overcometh” implies a conquering aspect to the believer’s warfare of faith, and brings us back to Messiah’s commendation at the beginning of his Epistle, that they earnestly contended for the faith. So Paul writes to the same ecclesia: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ...” (Eph. 6:12). The only weapon Messiah’s brethren possess is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17), and this is “mighty through God to the pulling

down of strongholds” of Sin (2 Cor. 10:4). The Lord Jesus Christ overcame (Jno. 16:33), and so will his brothers: being lovers of the Truth, they wage a valiant fight against the adversaries which abound.

The promise is to be allowed “to eat of the Tree of Life”. In the Apocalypse, the Tree of Life is used to represent the reward given to the faithful: “to him that overcometh.” Here, being permitted to eat of the Tree of Life represents the gift to those who have endured a period of trial. This clearly contrasts with the expulsion from the Edenic paradise of those who failed to “overcome”, preventing them from partaking of the life-giving Tree.

The presence of the Tree of Life in the Garden taught Adam and his wife that if they were faithful, their faithfulness would be rewarded. But even in the event of their transgression, there would be a Way of Life provided – on God’s terms, as it duly was. The expulsion of Adam and his wife from the Garden taught that the way of life can only be accessed by the means of God’s appointing. Thus, the tree stands as a powerful exhortation to us, not to devise fables which contradict the main thrust of Scripture, not to walk along the broad way that leads to destruction, but rather to understand and accept the way of Salvation, as appointed by the Lord Himself. We must seek wisdom, and then walk in it’s ways, which are the ways to the Tree of Life. And then, if we show ourselves to be faithful, if we “keep” God’s ways, if we seek to “overcome” sin, then by God’s grace, when the Lord returns, we might partake of the Antitypical Tree, and so be “partakers of the divine nature” even as the Lord has promised (2Pet 1:4).

Christopher Maddocks

The Love of Money

If there was ever an age that revolves around covetousness and the desire to have, it is the one in which we live. At every corner, there are advertisements designed to create in us a spirit of lust and want. Materialism is a word that encapsulates the predominant mindset of our day – and along with it, there is the desire to obtain money in order that we might be able to have those things that the advertisers persuade us to want.

The Bible, however, presents a different set of standards by which men should live. Teaching “the love of money is the root of all evil:” the holy writ continues: “which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (2 Tim. 6:10). Covetousness is Idolatry (Col. 3:5), as it leads men away from God, to fulfill their desires instead. Men governed by covetousness are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (1 Tim. 3:4), their thoughts rising no higher than their carnal instincts for personal gain, increasing in wealth and possessions.

The words of Paul to Timothy, cited above, are often misunderstood. The saying that “the love of money is the root of all evil” is not intended to convey the idea that all evil things originate from the love of money. Rather it is that the love of money itself can produce nothing else but evil. Whilst money itself is a necessary part of life in a

capitalist society, it is not something to be coveted by the disciple of Christ. Being content with whatever circumstances our Father places us in, our primary activities ought not tend towards the pursuit of material things.

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isa. 55:2) asks the prophet. The man of God is not satisfied with the transient nature of the things that money can buy: he seeks rather to direct his energies towards seeking first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness (Mat. 6:33). The correct spirit in relation to the things of this life is expressed in the Proverbs:

“remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me” (Prov. 30:8).

Seeking only those things needful to sustain a mortal existence, rather than to lust after material things, the man of God fixes his attention on Christ’s coming kingdom instead. So the Apostle taught: “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For 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. 6:6-8). Human selfishness and inordinate desire instead seeks after the riches and comforts of this life, with scant regard for the things pertaining to the age to come.

The Scriptures provide us with a number of examples of covetous men, who were lovers of money, rather than lovers of God: we shall consider some of them with the view to learning from their example.

ACHAN

Joshua chapter 6 recounts the besieging of Jericho by Israel, as they began to take up their promised inheritance. Verse 17 tells us that

“the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to Yahweh: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she, and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (Josh. 6:17).

Here, according to the alternative marginal rendering, the word translated “accursed” literally means: “devoted”. Another translation renders the verse thus:

“And the city shall be put under the ban, and all that is in it belongs to Yahweh ...” (The Scriptures)

The idea here, is that all of the things in Jericho were devoted to Yahweh: it “belonged” to Him. There is a similarity here with the Laws concerning the firstfruits, and the firstborn: God was given His part first, and then the people could partake of what remained later. This was, in a sense, the firstfruits of the land that Israel were going in to possess. It was devoted to Yahweh. So we read in verse 19 of the treasures of Jericho: “But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto Yahweh: they shall come into the treasury of Yahweh”

Achan, however, was tempted to take for himself that which was devoted to God:

“but the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed (i.e. devoted) thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed (devoted) thing: and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against the children of Israel” (Josh. 7:1).

Through a process of selection, Achan and his family were taken, and Achan himself made confession of what he had done:

“... indeed I have sinned against Yahweh, Elohim of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it” (Josh. 7:20-21).

Here, we see raw covetousness: “the lust of the eyes,” as it is styled elsewhere. He “saw” the proscribed items, and took them for his own use. This is a pattern often repeated both in Scripture, and our own experience – taking that which belongs to someone else. In our experience, covetousness is not simply about taking that which we desire: all too often it also involves desiring that which belongs to somebody else. It is written that “he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two and three witnesses” (Heb. 10:28), and Achan provides an example of that, being put to death for his sin. But “that man perished not alone in his iniquity” (Josh. 22:20), as wrath came upon the whole congregation for his iniquity. H P Mansfield describes the situation thus:

Achan soon became a sad example of the precept of Moses: “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). When deliberate sin such as that of Achan is committed it is a transgression against that society as well as against Yahweh; and though hidden for a time, it will ultimately be manifested. Yahweh’s action in the case of Achan revealed the seriousness of transgression and showed that there was no escaping the consequences of such. Bearing this in mind Ecclesial leaders should overlook those placed in their care with the greatest concern. In this case, one sin affected the nation as did one sin the human race at the beginning (Rom. 5:17-18).” (Joshua Expositor) What of ourselves? Hebrews chapter 10 continues: “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing ...” (Heb. 10:29).

In all of our dealings in life, we must put Yahweh first. First in terms of time, and how we use it. Second in terms of this world’s goods that have been entrusted to us, that we might use them in service to our God. Our maxim, as cited above, ought to be “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” with all that we need to follow. If Achan had waited, he could have partaken of the fatness of the land legitimately – but he could not wait, and stole that which belonged to the Almighty. The example of

Achan then, is that we should put Yahweh first in all our ways, and He will ensure that we have those other things we need to sustain a mortal existence.

BALAAM

Jude characterizes certain false brethren as having “ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward ...” (Jude 11). Peter elaborates on this, saying that they have “gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15). The spirit of Balaam then, is one of greedily seeking a reward, to the expense of others. But notice the words of Jude: they “ran”. They were eager to obtain their “wages”, just like Balaam was, and ran to collect them. Numbers chapter 22 records how Balaam (evidently a renegade prophet), was hired by Balak, the king of the Moabites to curse the people of Israel. His motivation was not that Israel would be cursed, but that he would receive “wages” for cursing them. It was a foolish enterprise to begin with: why should the Almighty listen to a greedy man, and curse His people? But Balaam was blinded by the prospect of having much gain out of the matter. He continued to try and speak words of cursing against Israel, but on each occasion, he found himself restrained from speaking his own words, and was instead made to speak God’s Words – and so blessed, not cursed God’s people:

“nevertheless, Yahweh thy God would not hearken to Balaam, but Yahweh thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because Yahweh loved thee” (Deut. 23:5).

Being unable to speak words of condemnation towards the People of God, Balaam did not give up. Desperate to obtain the wages of unrighteousness, he instead changed his tactics. He “taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:14). The record in Numbers simply tells us that “Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab” (Num. 25:1). In fact, this was at the instigation of Balaam, eager to cause Israel to fall. Being unable to curse them directly himself, he orchestrated a situation where the Moabite women were brought in, who taught Israel to fornicate with them, and partake of feasts to their gods. Through his actions, Israel brought a curse upon themselves.

There are many examples for us here. We should not seek to advance ourselves at the expense of others. That is the way of the world: to tread others down in the endeavor to elevate ourselves. But Balaam’s subtle tactic brings a salutary warning for us. Man cannot curse us anymore that Balaam could curse Israel. No man can separate us from the love of Christ. So it is written:

“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

Nothing then, can separate us from the love of Christ. At least nearly nothing: the only thing that can separate us is our own selves. “every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). We can, through succumbing to our own carnal desires, be “drawn away” from the love of God. This was Balaam’s approach: get Israel to bring a curse upon themselves, by inducing them to commit fornication, and fulfil their desires with the Moabitish women. And this is the only possible way that we can become cursed: of our own doing, and the unwise exercise of our own free will.

NABAL

1 Samuel chapter 25 introduces us to Nabal, who was a rich man: “The man was very great” in terms of his wealth. He was approached by David (who was fleeing from Saul) for help by way of providing sustenance. Nabal refused, saying: “there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” (1 Sam. 25:10-11).

Nabal then, is an example of a man who had plenty of this world’s goods, yet refused to use his wealth to help others. This is what we find in the world around us: men and women, for some reason, appear to be very possessive of their money and wealth: they want it for themselves, and don’t want to part with it for the benefit of others. A similar example comes out in Messiah’s parable of the Rich Man who built bigger barns to contain his goods.

In this parable, a certain rich man increased his possessions, and ran out of room to store his fruits. His solution was to pull down his barns, and build bigger ones which he could use to store his surplus goods. In the parable, the rich man trusted in his riches, saying: “I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:19-20). What the rich man ought to have done with his surplus goods was to give them to the poor and needy, but in his selfish delusion, he thought he was settled for many years to come. However, the end of his life came sooner than he anticipated, and as Paul testified elsewhere, we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.

This parable appears to echo some of the principles seen in the case of Nabal. Just as the rich man said “take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry”, so we find that Nabal “held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king, and Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken ...”. Indulging in his own wealth, Nabal’s life was cut short: “it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, ... that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that Yahweh smote Nabal, that he died” (1 Sam. 25:37-38). So it was, that just like the rich man in Messiah’s parable, his life was cut short, and the abundance of his riches could not save him from the grave. As it is written: “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). Nabal was not wise: his name literally means “fool”,

and the record indeed demonstrates his selfish greed and folly – what a contrast between him and the wonderful spirit exhibited by his wife Abigail!

JUDAS

Judas Iscariot's name is notorious for his betrayal of his Master. He was the keeper of the bag, but he was also a thief. On the occasion where a woman of faith anointed the feet of Messiah with "very costly ointment", Judas was most displeased. He said:

"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ..." (Jno. 12:5).

But the reason for his objection was not because he cared for the poor at all – the record continues: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (Jno. 12:6). It would appear that in the bag was the collected money, to be used to help the poor. A modern example would be of a brother receiving money to pass onto the needy, but who took it for himself instead: this is the spirit of Judas: a self-seeking thief, who despised the poor. His greatest crime was denying the Lord Jesus himself, selling him for the cost of a Hebrew slave. Notice his words to the chief priests: "what will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you". Self interest, not caring about his Master at all.

"What will ye give me" is a spirit all too often seen in the world around us. Men and women will do nothing unless there is a clear personal gain from it. This was the attitude of Israel of old. Consider the following testimonies:

"who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith Yahweh of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (Mal. 1:10).

"the heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money" (Mic. 3:11).

This is the spirit of our age; "what will ye give me?" by way of money or material advantage. But the better position is the reverse of this: "what can I give you?" In Judas we see a man motivated by the love of money, stealing from the poor fund, even to the extent of denying his Master for material gain.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

The early believers, in order to meet a particular need, sold their houses and property to provide money for the poor. There was a logic behind this: in Matthew chapter 24, Messiah had warned them of the coming judgments upon Jerusalem, and so it made sense to leave in advance, and to sell their property, rather than to suffer the loss of it when the Roman Eagles came to take their prey. In Acts chapter 5, we find that Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession, and brought some of the proceeds of that sale to lay it before the Apostles. However, they claimed to be giving all of the proceeds, not some of it. There would have been nothing wrong in them only giving some of the

money, if they had said that was what they intended to do. But they lied and claimed to be giving everything. So the Apostle rebuked them: "... why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). Men might have an appearance of giving their all to the Lord, sometimes an apparent lifetime of service: but if they are not in reality, their sins shall find them out: they are lying to the Holy Spirit.

In these few examples, we have principles for our learning, that we might not be like them. The predominant features of each case are as follows:

- **Achan:-** did not seek after Yahweh first, and stole from that which was devoted to divine service.
- **Balaam:-** sought riches to the expense of others, who he sought to condemn in order to elevate himself.
- **Nabal:-** a selfish fool, who indulged himself in his opulence rather than to help the poor and needy.
- **Judas:-** sought self-interest, a thief who stole from the poor, and betrayed his Master for money.
- **Ananias & Saphira:-** Gave an appearance of devoting everything to the Lord, whilst holding back things for themselves.

Our Master taught: "take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Men run to and fro, being busied with the affairs of this life, and to increase their worldly goods. Labouring for meat that perisheth, both men and women leave little time for Yahweh, in meditating upon His Word, and developing the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). The love of money can produce only evil, and this is what we see in those who seek it to the expense of spiritual things. Instead of accruing money which rightfully belongs to somebody else, we need to divert our energies into seeking after the hidden treasures of Wisdom, that we might recognize our position before the Almighty, and at the last, receive blessings at His Hand.

Christopher Maddocks

Sent by a brother for the benefit of our readers!

Q. Why use the name of Yahweh?

A. Because the Word of God which is magnified above all His name (Psa. 138:2), invites us to do so. It declares: "Extol Him by His Name Yah" (Psa. 68:4). We are also exhorted concerning the name, to "despise it not" (Mal. 1:6), to exalt it (Psa. 34:3-4), to remember it (Psa 20:7, 45:17) to revere it (Psa. 86:11-12), to praise it (Psa. 113:1) to love it (Psa 119:132), to bless it (Psa. 96:2), to know it (Isa. 52:6), to publish it (Deut. 32:3), to sing to it (Psa. 61:8) to pray through it (Psa. 140:13). Jesus declared it (Jno. 17:26), manifested it (Jno. 17:6), and taught his disciples the principles of it (Jno. 17:11). The Ecclesia is described as a "people for God's name" (Acts 15:14), and the Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Hallowed be thy Name." Now some brethren claim we should not use the name, but the Scriptures exhort as indicated above. What think you we should do?"

“Election versus Calvinism”

THE ninth chapter of Romans is full of important instruction in the ways of God—ways which, as Jehovah Himself tells us by Isaiah, are as much higher than our ways as heaven is higher than the earth: ways therefore which fail to engage the sympathies of the purely natural mind, but which, nevertheless, are more beautiful and ennobling and ultimately beneficial than all the best ways of man.

The seed or family for which God purposes the final inheritance of the earth in an immortal state, are not developed on the mere hereditary principle. They are not to come into Abraham’s inheritance merely because they have Abraham’s blood in their veins, but because, being Abraham’s children by descent or adoption, they are also characterised by that faith and docility of Abraham with which God was well pleased, and which He counted unto him for righteousness.

We must on reflection be able very heartily to pronounce this an excellent “way.” How infinitely superior to the principle which regulates the succession of property— even of crowns and sceptres—in the human system of things. A man is heir to a certain estate or a certain throne merely because he is born of a certain parentage. It matters not how unfitted he may be for the position. He may be a bad man, an imbecile, or a tyrant: he is secured all the same in the full enjoyment of his rights and possessions. The consequence may be seen in the wretched condition of things upon earth.

But the “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,” to whom the future in all the earth belongs, are men not only of legal title but of the highest moral qualification. The legal title is in fact made to hang on the moral qualification; for the legal title will be quashed if the other is defective. Their status depends not on their extraction but on their fitness for the privileges of the extraction. The children of promise only are counted for the seed. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. If any man have not the faith and character of Abraham, he is not his seed and heir according to the promise, even if he have the blood of Abraham or the highest title which adoption can give. He must “do the works of Abraham” (John 8:39).

How glorious will be the result of the application of this rule! Every member of the developed family, when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets will appear in the kingdom of God, will be a tried and true man, not only holding, in the grace of God, a true title to his position as a noble in the future age, but possessing those moral characteristics which will make him a blessing to all in subjection to him, a constant sweetness to all his glorious equals, a joy to Christ, and a glory to God.

You say, “What? Will they not be forgiven men and therefore men who in their day have erred and come short?” Yes: “There liveth not a man that sinneth not” (1 Kings 8:46; Eccles. 7:20); “It is of the Lord’s mercy we are not consumed” (Lam. 3:22). But then, realise this: only certain are forgiven. The question is, who? The answer in all the Scriptures is: “Those who confess their sins and forsake them,” “those who are of broken and contrite heart,” “those who forgive others” and who, having been forgiven much, love much, and labour much in the Lord and for the Lord. These do the works of Abraham—works of faith and obedience: these have the spirit of Christ. They are

a great contrast to the withered branches who bring forth no fruit: who are in the lukewarm state which the Lord hates.

But not only are the children of the promise in preference to the children of the flesh counted for the seed: we have to look at another of the ways of God in the statement of Paul, that the working out of the plan was so arranged “that the purpose of God according to election might stand.” Rebecca was told before the birth of Jacob and Esau, that the elder should serve the younger. Paul deals with this as if it were an arbitrary selection; and answers the objection on this ground. He as much as says, “Granting that God chose one before another of His own prerogative, is there unrighteousness with God in this?” (verse 14). Has He not a right to do as He will with His own? “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour, if it so please him?” He quotes God’s declaration to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” from which he deduces the conclusion, “So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

Now, all this is very important and very reasonable, but it is far from giving countenance to Calvinistic ideas of election. It is the importation of Calvinistic ideas that makes the argument obscure or the chapter difficult. The idea before Paul’s mind is only properly to be seen side by side with that which he was opposing. It is a very simple one; viz., that the development of God’s family upon earth is an affair of divine purpose upon divine principles of selection: and not a matter of human plan or human working out at all.

Both the Jews and the Greeks assigned to man a large part in their respective conceptions of the working out of futurity. Human merit according to the Greeks, human pedigree according to the Jews, had all to do in determining the evolution of spiritual destinies. Paul’s argument is that it is an affair of divine pre-conceived purpose, altogether; apart from which, man could have done absolutely nothing; and that the purpose is according to election or choice, that is, a purpose based upon certain principles of choice.

Where Calvinism is wrong is that it ignores the principles which regulate the choice. It makes it purely an exercise of “sovereign will,” which it truly is in the sense of being unconstrained and irresponsible authority; but it fails to take into account what God has revealed concerning the way He exercises His election, selection, or choice. The cases of Jacob and Esau, and Pharaoh cited by Paul, illustrate the point. They were all the result of a divine purpose: but the purpose was formed in harmony with moral fitness.

If Esau’s rejection was proclaimed beforehand, it must be noticed that Esau turned out a wild man and a lover of sport—a thing known in advance to Him to whom “all His works are known from the beginning.” If Pharaoh was raised up and hardened that God’s power might be exhibited, it must be recognised that Pharaoh was a fit subject for such a use. He was not a humble-minded, reasonable obedient man, but a man of self-sufficient and wilful heart, and all was known to God beforehand.

If a believing, obedient Jacob had been treated as Esau; if an Abraham had been dealt with as a Pharaoh, we should then have had the confounding proposition of Calvin illustrated. We should not have had a “purpose of God according to election,” but a purpose “not according to election:” for no principle of selection would have been visible in such a procedure.

If it be asked “were not these men—Esau and Pharaoh—what they were as the result of the divine purpose beforehand?” the answer is, that it is vain to go behind the beginning of matters in that way. We can only deal with things as they are. It is vain to trouble ourselves with the inscrutable causes. It is a matter of some concern and some advantage to see that the works of God when accomplished are developed in harmony with the principles which He has declared to regulate His acts.

If it be said that this is not facing but shirking the difficulty involved in the idea of a divine purpose, we can only take final refuge in Paul’s question, “Hath not the potter power over the clay to work it into any shape he pleases?” Grant the potter and the clay, and there is an end to all controversy. The point to see clearly is that vessels, when the potter has made them are not put by him to a use inconsistent but in harmony with their nature.

“Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will.” Thus incisively does Paul state the final challenge of the objector. It appears unanswerable like many other sallies of sophistry. It fails through not recognising that the working out of God’s purposes with persons leaves room for the exercise of human volition as well, and that in this margin of individual volition, it is not unreasonable that God should distribute praise or blame as the case may call for.

There is much presumption in the objections brought forward on this subject, which are best met by Paul’s rejoinder, “Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?”

What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom He hath called not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles?”

What answer can there be to this? Only one that is truly reasonable: If God, willing to manifest the attributes of His character for human acquaintance, chose to constitute men and create circumstances for the effectual accomplishment of that purpose, there is not only no room for cavil, but occasion for highest gratitude and praise. The Possessor of Heaven and Earth can do as He pleases, without rightful challenge from any of the souls He has made; and when what He pleases to do, as a whole, is so wise and good and glorious, it is the part of the creatures of His hand to stand still and adore.

This will certainly be the attitude of those whom Paul styles “vessels of mercy.” Who those are we may easily learn. Vessels of mercy are those to whom mercy is shown: This mercy is a sparing and favouring where no right to such exists. This will be done to those who take a reasonable attitude. Though God says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” He does not mean that His mercy is capriciously bestowed. It is bestowed on very well defined principles. “His mercy is towards them that fear Him.”

“To the merciful man, Thou wilt show Thyself merciful.” “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Such are the plain declarations of the word, illustrated and confirmed by the statement of Jesus that “if we from the heart forgive not every man his brother his trespasses, neither will the Father forgive our trespasses.” The mercy of God will be shown towards those who take a reverent and docile attitude towards God, and a merciful attitude towards men. Such are “vessels of mercy,” filled with the mercy of God and overflowing with it towards others. Such only are the children of God.

They are “not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.” For a long time, they were “of the Jews only,” and only a very small remnant of them. As the eye travels backwards, it picks out the Nehemiahs, and the Daniels and the Jeremiahs, and the Davids and the Samuels, and the Joshuas and the Moses, and the Josephs, etc., and by the eye of a legitimate imagination, it sees clustered round those illustrious names like the seven thousand in Elijah’s day, many unnamed and to men unknown children of faith and righteousness, vessels of mercy “afore prepared unto glory.”

Still, in proportion to the mass of Israel, they were few and uninfluential, and outside Israel they were not to be found, for “the sons of the strangers,” joining themselves to Israel became Israel. In the apostolic age, even after Christ’s ascension, the disciples as we know “preached unto none but unto the Jews only.” But the day came when “unto the Gentiles also was granted repentance unto life.” In the work of extending this privilege, Paul as we know, performed a prominent — in fact the leading part, so much so as to be called “the apostle of the Gentiles.”

In this work we have come to be included through those ways of Providence which have brought us into contact with the testimony; and it is our duty and our wisdom to realise what this means with regard to our position and relation to God and man. Are we vessels of mercy prepared afore unto glory? Some say “that is just what we would like to know.” They are apt to take a Calvinistic view of the situation and to embarrass themselves with that maundering torment which in past times has sent some people to the asylum: the torment of arguing that if they are not among “the elect” it is no use trying, and that if they are, it is superfluous.

The unscripturalness of such a view must be evident at once from the constant vein of entreaty and exhortation that runs through the epistles, impressing on the believers the necessity of taking heed “lest” they should come short of the promised inheritance (Heb. 4:1). The purpose of God in the matter—even as in the case of Jacob and Esau—is not arbitrary but “according to election,” and the election is “according to fitness,” and fitness is according to the earnest endeavour of good and honest hearts to “make their calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). Therefore those may know themselves “vessels of mercy prepared afore unto glory,” who, examining their own selves, as Paul advises, find themselves answer to the characteristics of those who are declared the appointed inheritors of the kingdom and glory of God.

Are they “poor in this world, rich in faith?” (Jas. 2:5). So far they answer to the right description. Are they rich in this world? Well, their case is not hopeless but it is difficult. It is Jesus who says so (Matt. 19:23), and it is not for us to cloak his words.

Paul recognises their case as hopeful but calling for special vigilance (1 Tim. 6:17–19). Jesus also (Luke 16:9). If they are rich in faith and good works, their worldly riches will no more work against them than the riches of Abraham. But “rich in this world and poor in faith” is a bad case. “Poor in this world and poor in faith” is worse. Rich in this world and rich in faith is beautiful: but the prevalent apostolic type is defined in James’s words: “poor in this world, rich in faith.”

Well then, are they righteous in their lives? Another mark in their favour. “The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9). Even “the righteous shall scarcely be saved” (1 Pet. 4:18). The habitually disobedient and unrighteous are without hope except they repent. Then are they diligent followers of every good work? (1 Tim. 5:10). Do they forsake not the assembling of themselves with the saints? (Heb. 10:25). Do they pray always (Luke 18:1), and in everything give thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus? (Eph. 5:20). Are they “peculiar” and zealous of good works? (Tit. 2:14). Are they, in a word, followers of Paul, even as he was of Christ? (1 Cor. 11:1). If so, they need not distress themselves about the abstract question of whether they are included among “the elect”; for the elect are made up of such, and of none else; and “all” and “whosoever” that are of that stamp will be included.

It may be said that such a standard excludes hope. It would do so if there were no provision for short-coming. But the “vessels of mercy” have to remember that they are vessels of mercy after all, and that after all they can do, it is of the Lord’s favour that they are chosen unto glory. If their faults were not overlooked they could not be saved. David gives expression to the idea when he says, “If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that Thou mayest be feared” (Psa. 130:4). The multitude of the redeemed is a multitude who rejoicingly acknowledge in the day of their glory that they have been “washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb”—sins not only pre-baptismal, but after adoption, as in the case of Peter. Consequently, we must not despond in our weakness, but lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but rather let it be healed (Heb. 12:12, 13).

It may be said that this doctrine of forgiveness neutralises the doctrine of moral excellence being necessary to inclusion among “the elect.” It may be asked, where the need of righteousness if forgiveness rehabilitates the sinner? The question overlooks the fact that forgiveness itself is conditional. For example, Jesus teaches that a man who is not forgiving will not be forgiven (Matt. 18:35). There are other qualities requisite for the obtainment of forgiveness. Only those who fear God and have a tender heart towards His covenants and His ways—who love Him and hope in His mercy, and are striving earnestly to walk acceptably before Him, will receive the great benefit of forgiveness for Christ’s sake.

Only for such will He intercede; and if He intercede not, a man has no hope. There is a great difference between men of the loving, striving, earnest type and those who are callous and lukewarm. The shortcomings of the former—confessed and repented and prayed for, will be overlooked, where the debts of the indifferent and unmerciful will be exacted to the “uttermost farthing.” Thus the apparently conflicting doctrines of personal righteousness and forgiveness meet in harmony, each coming up to the boundary line where they meet and fuse in a beautiful blending of colour.

Let us rejoice and be glad at the position we have attained in the matter in contrast with Israel after the flesh. It remains true as Paul says in this chapter, that "the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is faith. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." We were all of us Gentiles following not righteousness, but the passing gratification of an unenlightened mind. In the purpose of God according to election, we have been called to be "vessels of mercy." Let us see to it that we use every endeavour to make our calling and election sure.

CC Walker, The Christadelphian, 1922, page 355–359.

Colossians – An Exhortation for Unity in Love (10)

RELATIONSHIPS

We have commented in an earlier article of this series how that within this Epistle, the Spirit draws out and develops a steady, logical, progressive train of thought. So it is, that Chapter 1 speaks of the deliverance of the believers from the "power of darkness", to become members of the united Body of Christ. Chapter 2 then elaborates on the pre-eminent attributes of that body; how it is "complete in him" (2:10), using that fact as evidence against the Judaisers who sought to add to the Gospel of Christ - showing that they were seeking to add to that which was already complete. And chapter 2 also emphasises that if we are truly part of the Body of Christ, then transgressions are not imputed to us, for we are by association with him "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands", that is, the "putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh" through baptism.

Chapter 3 then builds further upon this foundation, bringing those principles to a more personal level. If sins are not imputed to Christ's brethren, their being baptised into his death; it logically follows that being dead to sin, they ought not continue in sinful works. Thus chapter 3 describes the mode of behaviour required of the individual component parts of the Body; the set of attributes which need to be removed and discarded as a filthy garment, and the type of attributes with which true brethren must be arrayed. So much we have considered in our previous studies. But a further feature of chapter 3 on this personal level, is the way Paul speaks of relationships, particularly those within a family household.

We saw how the attributes of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and love, which the Apostle exhorts the believer to develop (v 12-14) are all to do with our approach to others. The way in which we interact with fellow-believers, and their many weaknesses, for the mutual edification of the body as a whole. But verses 18 onwards bring into the discourse practical areas where those attributes might be applied. That is, within the family environment; for as members of a believing family learn to interact in a Christ-like spirit with each other, they will so develop that they might also behave righteously towards members of the Greater

Family to which they belong; even the family of Christ. Whether they be wives, husbands, children or even servants and their masters, all are members of that greater family, and so all need to develop within their immediate circle of associates for the collective good of the body as a whole, and to the glory of the Head of the household, even the Lord Jesus himself.

RELATIONSHIPS - HUSBANDS AND WIVES

So the exhortation is given, first to wives and their husbands: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col 3:18-19). It is a Divine principle established from Eden, that the man, not the woman must be the head of a godly household. So the Elohic proclamation was directed to Eve: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee" (Gen 3:16). But what is the reason for this arrangement? The Apostle draws out 2 basic principles, which give ample explanation for the husband's position of "rule". Firstly, the very order and purpose of Eve's formation from Adam's body itself establishes a pre-eminence: "for Adam was first formed, then Eve ...". But secondly, Eve was deceived by the Serpent, not Adam: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"? - these are reasons, according to Paul as the inspired apostle, why the woman should "learn in silence with all subjection" (1Tim 2:11-14). Adam was the first formed, designed to reflect the Creator's Image, whereas the Woman, being the deceived, was the first to rebel. Not that women in general are more rebellious, or any way inferior to men - in many cases the reverse is true. But rather in the Divine Scheme of things, a man and his wife are called upon to enact a wonderful parable reflective of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the ecclesia, as expounded in the Song of Songs which is Solomon's.

THE DIVINE PARABLE OF MARRIAGE

In the enacted parable, it is the Ecclesial Bride who is the transgressor - enticed by "the god of this world" to rebel against her maker; with the constituent members thereof requiring forgiveness. She is made up of individuals from all walks of life, from a tremendous diversity of backgrounds - yet even in their natural state, with all one thing in common; their sinfulness in the sight of God. These individuals become united as one body, having found forgiveness through the sacrificial love of Christ towards his bride. Christ is the Lord who, through his sufferings, gave rise to her formation, as being distinct from the general morass of humanity. So it is, that in the Parable of marriage, the bride - as identified with Eve the first transgressor, represents the Ecclesia; and the Husband therefore typifies Christ to whom the ecclesia must be subservient.

In an age of 'women's liberation,' 'equal rights' and other human devices of usurpation, such wonderful principles are hidden from the general populace which always seeks to destroy principles instituted by Divine arrangement. Even so it was in the days of the Apostle, for speaking of the principles of marriage he said "this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the ecclesia" (Eph 5:32). "The husband is the head

of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the ecclesia: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the ecclesia is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it"? (Eph 5:23-25).

SARAH AND ABRAHAM

Arguably the greatest illustration of such sisterly submissiveness in Scripture, is seen in the example of Sarah before her husband. Indeed, it is her example that the Spirit speaks of as being instructive for all generations of the kind of attributes with which sisters should adorn themselves: "... In the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement"? (1Pet 3:5-6). And the point here comes home with added force when we realise that in actual fact Sarah did not literally say Abraham was her Lord; she spoke it in her heart: "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen 18:12). This laugh of disbelief at the Angel's promise was, nevertheless a powerful example of one who spontaneously and naturally feel within herself that her husband was her lord.

But whilst wives ought to be submissive to the Scripture, and therefore to their husbands as Scripture commands, husbands also have responsibilities, one of which is to display love, not bitterness to their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them". The relationship is two-way; the husband has his role to play in the parable; one of great responsibility; of seeking to mirror the love of the Lord Jesus to his Bride, for whom he laid down his life.

THE LAW AND BITTERNESS

One way that husbands could inflict bitterness upon their wives under the Mosaic dispensation, was by observing the provision of Numbers 5; the Trial of Jealousy. This was a procedure to be followed when the husband felt bitterness towards his wife because of suspected infidelity: "If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, and a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; and the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled ..." (Num 5:12-14), in these conditions the husband could instigate certain proceedings. These involved the offering of certain sacrificial animals; but also the unusual procedure of requiring the woman to drink dust taken from the tabernacle floor, and mixed with water. This was styled "the bitter water that causeth the curse"? for if the woman was guilty of adultery, a physical affliction would result, causing the woman to become barren and cursed:

"the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse

among her people. And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed" (Num 5:26-28).

When the procedure was actually implemented, these curses were written down in a scroll by the priest; and blotted out by him: "the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water" (v 23). But what is the meaning of these principles? There seemed to be no limit to the number of times a man could subject his wife to such; a naturally jealous man could cause much grief, by constantly bringing his innocent wife in such a way. There are several principles to be observed:

THE CURSE OF THE GUILTY

Firstly, the eating, or rather drinking of dust was imposed upon a woman suspected of unfaithfulness. This rather reminds us of the curse of the Serpent - just note the similarity of the terms used: "Yahweh Elohim said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Gen 3:14). So it was that the guilty woman - who in the first instance, took the role of the serpent in enticing the man to eat of the proscribed fruit - bears a punishment not dissimilar to the Serpent. Her belly was affected, she was cursed, and she would also eat dust. For the innocent woman however, there was no curse. It was blotted out by the High Priest. She had remained loyal and true to her husband, and because of her faithfulness, the priest's handwriting of the curse was blotted out. And this is directly alluded to by Paul to the Colossians, speaking of how through faithfulness to Christ, his bride is freed from the curse: "you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 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" (Col 2:13-14).

There is, however, a most significant difference. Under the law, it was the innocent woman who had the curse blotted out. But under the law of Christ, it is the guilty, who are therefore in need of forgiveness. And through faith in him, our trespasses are forgiven; and righteousness is imputed to us for his sake. And being thus considered righteous before the Father, the curse is removed - blotted out. This then is the exhortation for husbands in the parable of marriage: They enact Christ before their bride. They ought not therefore inflict bitterness upon them as under the law, but rather manifest the spirit of longsuffering and forgiveness. They must "love"? their wives, even as Christ loved his ecclesia, and must therefore show forbearance in all things - not exalting themselves over their wives - but rather recognising that being part of the greater Bride they themselves are transgressors, and in need of having the handwriting of ordinances which is against them blotted out by mercy.

Also within the family relationships described by the Apostle, are children and servants, both of whom are exhorted to "obey in all things" (3:20) their parents/masters. The obedience of children brings great blessing, as witnessed in the example of the Rechabites. To these the word of Yahweh came through Jeremiah, "Thus saith Yahweh of Hosts, the Elohim of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith Yahweh of Hosts, the Elohim of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me

for ever" (Jer 35:18,19). So was given the promise of everlasting life in the Divine Presence in the Age to Come.

The Apostle likewise exhorted the young at Ephesus, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3). Rebellion is loathsome in the eyes of the Most High, and children must learn obedience, that they might also show obedience to their greater Father when they are born again through Baptism. It is "right" for them to be such, and length of days is the reward which will come to them also.

With regard to Servants, we have already suggested in the first part of this series that the Ecclesia at Colosse was actually the ecclesia which met in Philemon's house (Phil 2). If this is so, then there is particular poignancy to the words here, for Onesimus of whom Paul wrote to Philemon would himself be one of the servants being exhorted to obedience. Previously he had been rebellious, being "unprofitable"? (v 11), running away from his master (v 15), and therefore his responsibilities. But having been received back "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved"? (v 16), he would be motivated to render conscientious service as unto Christ.

Even so, the Apostle exhorted the Colossians: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col 3:22,23). And whether we be servants or freemen, the principles here are applicable to us also, for we are all servants of Christ: "he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price ..." (1Cor 7:22-23), even the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. So it is, that being members of the Bride of Christ, we must show the spirit of submission to him, as our Lord. And as the servants of Christ, we must render unto him due service as he requires - And if we serve him thus, with all diligence with humility and conscientiousness, he will surely reward us with length of days, having blotted out our sins through his shed blood.

Christopher Maddocks

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Notes on the Book of Revelation (4)

Dr Thomas Translation:

Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lord's Day continued:

Rev 1:11 Saying, *I am the Alpha & the Omega, the First and the Last; and what thou beholdest write for a scroll, and send it to the Seven Ecclesias which are in Asia – to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.*

REVELATION 1	COMMENTS
<p>11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:</p>	<p>Jesus says I am Alpha, that is the beginning of God Manifestation in the Flesh.</p> <p>The Omega is the end of or fulfilling of Yahweh Elohim, God manifestation in a multitude of powerful ones. ie the multitudinous Christ Glorified.</p> <p>So</p> <p>Alpha = God manifestation in Christ</p> <p>Omega = God Manifestation in the Multitudinous Christ</p> <p>(The sound of the trumpet described here could also be to do with the preaching of the aionian Gospel.)</p> <p>“What John beheld, then, and what he has described as the subject of his first vision, is a representation of the Eternal Spirit manifested first, in the things behind, as the Alpha and the First; and afterwards, in the things before, as the Omega and the Last; and that between these two sets of things, or manifestations, is the opening of the invisible, and the deliverance of the saints from death. In this <i>turning point</i>, or epoch, between the Alpha things, and the Omega things, of the Spirit-Manifestation, the Key-Power unlocks the Gates of the Invisible, and sets the prisoners free from the bonds of death: so that, when the Alphas of the Spirit shall become the Omegas, they will be able to</p>

and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

say, as the constituents of the “One Yahweh and One Name,” “I am the First and the last, and the Living One: and I was dead, and behold, *I am living in (eis in, for, during)* the Aions of the Aions;” or THE THOUSAND YEARS: “Amen.” Not that he shall live no longer; but, seeing that the Apocalypse treats almost solely of the Millennial Day and its antecedents, the duration of “*the Living One*” is only relatively, not absolutely, expressed.”

(Dr Thomas Eureka Vol1 pg.160)

A whole copy of the Apocalypse sent to all the Ecclesias, maybe the beginning of it being re-copied and circulated to members & surrounding Ecclesias

“A scroll of parchment or papyrus. As it circulated round the churches named, copies would doubtless be made by them, & thus the publication began for the sake of those who have ears to hear.”

(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 3)



Dr Thomas Translation

Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lord's Day continued:

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice which spake with me; and having turned I saw Seven Golden Lightstands,

REVELATION 1	COMMENTS
12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;	<p>“That is, as the Lord explained, ‘the 7 churches ’ v20. ‘Ye are the light of the world...on a candlestick...giving light to all that are in the house ’Matt.5:14,15. Many of the apoc. visions are based upon the temple & its courts, altars & furniture for Christ's bondservants are ‘the temple of the living God ’2Cor.6:16”</p> <p>(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 3)</p> <p>As if the Tabernacle Menorah was dismantled with the lamps placed on a floor but each oil lamp is on a light stand (“candlestick”) Dr Thomas says the central shaft of Menorah is representative of Christ. Although the static things in the temple become animated (alive-moving) in the Apocalyptic Visions Rev 2v1 The saints glorified symbolised by 7 lights because the 7 Ecclesias Typify the saints. The messages to the 7 Ecclesias and the representation are intermingled.</p> <p>(Seems the candlestick of the Tabernacle was transferred to the Temple [see 2Chronicles 13v11] but distinct from the 7 golden candlesticks.)</p>

Dr Thomas Translation

Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lord's Day continued:

Rev 1:13 And in the midst of the seven lightstands I saw like to a Son of man invested to the feet, and compassed about the breast with a Golden Zone;

Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lord's Day continued:

Rev 1:14 And his head and the hairs white as it were wool, white as snow: and his eyes as a flame of fire;

REVELATION 1	COMMENTS
14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;	<p>"The hair represents a multitude who are one with the head. The Lamb of God has washed this multitude from their sins in his own blood. See Isa.1:18; cont. Isa.7:20 also see Ezk.5:1-6; Jer.7:29; Dan 7:9."</p> <p>(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4)</p> <p>Isa 1: 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."</p> <p>1Cor 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.</p> <p>Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.</p> <p>Dan 7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A Mission of Judgement and Retribution</p>

and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

“The eye is the symbol of intelligence, for “the light of the body is the eye.” The nature of the intelligence in predominant activity is expressed by the character of the symbol; hence an eye as a flame of fire, indicates **intelligence in wrathful activity**. The word for “eye” in the Hebrew also signifies “fountain;” because tears are welled up from the eye as water from a fountain or spring. Hence **the eyes of the Man of Multitude are fountains of flaming fire; they pour out flames as “a fiery stream,” and he becomes “a consuming fire.”**

(Dr Thomas Eureka Vol 1pg.173)

“ ‘Our God is a consuming fire’. The eyes represent the saints in the execution of the judgments written. Comp. the wheels of Ezk.ch.1; the stone of Zech.3:9, & the living creatures of Rev.4.”

(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4)

(to be continued)

The Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ

The question sometimes arises to the thoughtful student of the Word, Why was the Lord Jesus Christ baptised? He had no committed sin to repent of, or be cleansed from, so why was it necessary?

The answer, we believe, is the fact that the Baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his mortal ministry, and it demonstrates a number of significant features of that ministry. John chapter 1 recounts the words of John the Baptist: “I knew him not, but that he should be manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water” (Jno.1:31). This making him “manifest to Israel” is again shown from Hebrews chapter 10, in a way which is most helpful in answering our question:

“Wherefore, **when he cometh into the world**, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure, Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God” (Heb.10:7).

This chapter then, describes a prayer of the Lord when he came “into the world”. This clearly cannot refer to his birth, as then he would not have been able to offer any prayer, or speak any words. The best explanation, is that this was a prayer offered by Messiah when he was made “manifest” to Israel (see also John 17:18). Luke records his baptism, and how that he prayed at that time: “Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptised, and praying ...” (Lu.3:21). Also it would be fitting that he did pray for the anointing with the holy spirit; and that without measure, which made him “The Christ”; as John the baptist testified: John 3:34 “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

The prayers of the Lord included “a body hast thou prepared me”. This was something that he demonstrated in his baptism. The descent and reemergence from the baptismal waters is the way in which believers associate themselves with the death and resurrection of Christ:

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together *in the likeness of his death*, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:4-5).

Notice that here, Baptism for believers is defined as being “planted together in the likeness of his death” – and we submit that when Jesus was baptised, he was also demonstrating the likeness of his death as the body “prepared” for sacrifice: which being accepted by God, enabled Him to give Christ the victory over sin and death by a glorious resurrection, which brought the destruction of the *diabolos*, the resident evil in the flesh.

This is in harmony with the Master’s own words to John regarding his baptism:

“Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for *thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*” (Mat. 3:15).

Here, the reason that Jesus himself gives for being baptised, is to “fulfil all righteousness”. How so? Christ had to do “all” the right things required of him, including baptism into his forthcoming sacrifice for sin. Of which we read: “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past ... to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom.3:25-26). The Righteousness of God was demonstrated through the offering of his body and the shedding of his blood, as a willing sacrifice. In this way God condemned (judged against) sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). This judgement declared the righteousness of God, which must be acknowledged through baptism into Christ’s death. In baptism Christ foreshadowed his personal cleansing by sacrifice (Heb. 9:12), that is, when he would pass through the grave to victory. And being an accepted representative, he is able to make intercession for his brethren, who are also baptised in the likeness of his death. Indeed, faithful brethren seek only to do the Will of God also, by which Will we can be saved (Heb. 10:10).

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