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

The Living Way

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

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"… Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)

Being "Born of the Spirit"

"The Spirit breaths where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit" (Jno 3:8 (The Scriptures 1998))

Most appropriately, the first spoken words recorded in Scripture are the words of the Most High giving the command for the commencement of Creative activity: "And God said "Let there be light:" and there was light" (Gen 1:3). Indeed, as even a casual perusal of the Genesis narrative will show, that was the pattern followed throughout each creative day: "by the word of Yahweh were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps 33:6). His breath went forth in the form of a vocal command, and the word uttered did not return unto him void (Is 55:11), but rather accomplished that which He pleased, commencing with the illumination of an otherwise darkened orb, thus marking the first day of Creation.

It is even so in the case of the New Creation currently being formed out of the ruinous wastes of fallen Humanity. The preparation of a "new Heavens and a new earth" (2Pet 3:13) for the Habitation of the Father's immortalised family, also commenced with the shining of Divine Glory into a benighted world, void of light and hope: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor 4:6). This glorious light gains entry to receptive hearts through the preaching of the Word, as "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ".

Yet not all are willing to be so illuminated; – the god of this world, as the "power of darkness" (Luke 22:53) blinds the hearts of those who care not for these things: "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2Cor 4:4). For the minority however, who receive the word in meekness, that word is able to save them as it becomes a powerful creative force within their hearts, generating a new life, a "new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col 3:10).

THE GERM OF A NEW LIFE

The Master himself spoke of the entry of the Word into the believer's heart, in terms of the seed, or germ of a new life being sown into varying types of soil:

> "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

> And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell upon good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold" (Luke 8:5-8).

And at the request of the disciples who desired to know "the mysteries of the kingdom of God", the interpretation was given: "The seed is the word of God" and the varying types of ground are the various types of hearts into which it is sown (Luke 8:11-15). The Seed of the word is implanted, but how it grows – if at all – is largely dependent upon whether it be consumed by fleshly desires, or lacks fertility amongst the stony hearted. Likewise, even if that seed is permitted to grow in a fertile ground, whether or not the resultant plant survives to fruition, is dependent upon whether or not the plant becomes strangled by the greater cares of this life; the weeds and thorns of no value, growing only to be rooted up and burned.

But when readily received into fertile ground and watered regularly by a continual ingestion of the nutrients of Scripture, when the recipient zealously guards that which is committed to his trust, the seed will grow strongly, and develop into a glorious plant yielding the fruit of the Spirit, by which the nature of the divine tree itself becomes known, even: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal 5:22), qualities adorning the lives of those who shall enter into the Kingdom of God. So it is, that in such hearts the word-seed finds a lodgement, and becomes a new life springing up as a willow by streams of water (cp Is 44:4) with a single purpose and objective – to bring forth those attributes pleasing to the Great Sower.

This emergence of a new spiritual life in the hearts of willing hearers, is described by the Spirit through Peter, as a kind of begettal: "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you" (1Pet 1:23). The seed sown is incorruptible – but yet it is sown into the fleshy tables of man's hearts. But this is the point: the lives of men are transient and failing; that which will abide and pass into immortality is not the natural man; but the New man, born from the Incorruptible Word, that "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24). Whether or not a man receives salvation at the last, is therefore dependent upon how he has cared for the seed; whether he has permitted it to grow into something worth preserving or no. The Old man of the flesh is to perish either way, and our salvation depends on us allowing the Creator to form a new life within us by the indwelling of His incorruptible Word.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the importance of this spiritual rebirth in his discourse with Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (Greek: from above), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". Again, he further elaborated upon this, saying:

> "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (Jno 3:3-8).

But what is the sense that the Master intended to convey here? Plainly, Nicodemus, the man of the night could not tell, for he had not as yet been subject to such a birth as that being referred to. The Seed had not as yet been permitted to enter into his darkened heart to give illuminance on matters pertaining to the Spirit. Thus, he enquired, "How can these things be?" To which the Master gave the rebuke "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Truly, he did not know. He could not tell; but it is our privilege to look into these things with discernment, for we – as he later did, have received the word with all meekness, thus receiving enlightenment.

Our opening quotation was from another translation of the Master's words:

> "The Spirit breathes where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit" (The Scriptures, 1998).

This also accords with Bro Thomas' rendering of the verse; the word rendered in the AV "wind" is actually the same as that rendered "spirit", and the context clearly indicates that the latter is to be preferred. Brother Thomas's rendering is:

> "The Spirit breathes where he pleases, and thou hearest his voice, but thou perceives not how he is come, and in what he goes away …"

"The Spirit breathes where it wishes" – and in so doing, it emits a sound, or voice, concerning which Nicodemus could hear, but not understand. And this is so often the case today. At Creation, Yahweh sent forth the breath of his mouth in giving the command for Light to be. And it was done. Even so, Yahweh has caused his breath to go forth in imparting a revelation to man, which gives enlightenment to the hearers: "all Scripture is breathed of God (Greek), and is profitable for doctrine …" (2Tim 3:16), as "holy men of God

spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2Pet 1:21). The Word contained in the pages of Scripture is the only Voice of the Spirit discernible in our day, and it certainly will achieve the Author's intended purpose: "my word that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish in the thing whereunto I sent it" (Is 55:11).

ORIGINS AND DESTINY

The Word was sent forth as "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ", for the purpose of illuminating the hearts of those with ears to hear, that the work of a new Creation could take place. But for Nicodemus, whilst he certainly heard the sound of that Word, the Voice of the Eternal Spirit being breathed through the Son; at that stage, he did not recognise it for what it was. In the Master, "The Word Made Flesh" (Jno 1:14), or the voice of the Spirit corporealized; he saw nothing more than "a teacher come from God". He did not truly perceive the nature of the Spirit that dwelt in Christ – either where it came from, or where it was going.

Likewise, none of the Pharisees to whom Nicodemus belonged, understood. The Spirit spake through the Son thus:

> "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ***ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.*** Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgement it true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (Jno 8:12-18).

Christ's Origins were heavenly (Jno 6:38). He came forth from The Father, as the only Begotten Son sent by him. Yet, preferring to remain in the darkness, the Pharisees did not recognise this: "Ye neither know me, nor my Father" (v 19), as the Master himself, declared. And again, "I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he that sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word" (v 42). The Law in which the Pharisees professed to delight, stated that the testimony of two witnesses was to be accepted– and there was two witnesses, the Master Himself, and the Eternal Father-Spirit who dwelt in him. As he spake to Nicodemus: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness" (Jno 3:11, compare Jno 8:38). The voice of the Spirit was heard, but not received. It's origins were not recognised, and so it's

message went unheeded by those who "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (verse 19).

WHITHER I GO YE CANNOT COME

Christ came from the Father, being His Son, and the habitation of the Spirit of Wisdom brought forth before the foundation of the world (Prov 8:22, cp 1Pet 1:11) – but where was he to go? This was the question of Peter:

> "Lord, ***whither goest thou?*** Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (Jno 13:36-38).

Here was Peter's determination to follow His Master to the very end – and the Master's foreknowledge of Peter's human weakness, and future failing. Christ was going to the cross, before ascending up "where he was before" (Jno 6:62). He was going to Calvary to suffer and bare the sins of many in offering himself up as the national sin-offering. And though Peter was adamant in his profession of allegiance to his Lord, though he desired to "follow the (sacrificial) lamb whithersoever he goeth" (cp Rev 14:4), yet he would not follow the Master then. But he would afterwards, as the Risen Christ later showed him, saying to him: "When thou wast young thou girded thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God" (Jno 21:19).

"SO IS EVERYONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT"

These things went unperceived by the man of the night who approached the Lord Jesus. "Thou hearest the voice thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth". But the Master did not end there, for he continued, "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (Jno 3:8). We also must be subject to the same, for without being born of the Spirit, we cannot "see the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus himself was the "firstborn" (Col 1:18), implying that others would follow, and indeed it is so, as the opening of John's Gospel informs us:

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light

> shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not … this was the true Light, which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world … and the world knew him not … but as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood; nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". (Jno 1:1-13).

Having been brought to the Light, we become "children of the Light" (1Thes 5:5), having been born of God, who is "the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow or turning. Of his own Will begat he us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas 1:18). Our origins, that is to say, the origins of the New Man of the Spirit; the "spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9) which is "formed" in us (Gal 4:19), is of Heaven, being the product of the Word received, and permitted to grow. And we have the same desire as Peter—to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; even to the extent of sharing his death. Even so, the Spirit Word thus received brings us into the representative grave in Baptism:

> "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 … knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed… now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Rom 6:4-10).

This is "whither" the Voice of the Spirit, or "The Word made flesh" "goeth" – to the grave, but then to glory, living unto God having been truly 'born of the spirit', to become spirit: "the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit" (1Cor 15:45). And we, having received the Spirit of adoption, seek to follow him. True, we cannot be sinless as he was, for the Old man of the flesh is too strong for us to eradicate completely from our lives. The enemy is too great for us. But that which is 'born of the spirit', that "new creature", or "new man" created by the Word is a powerful influence for good; yea, it cannot sin, though the natural man will, for thus it is written: "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (or, "he is powerless to sin" T/S 1998), because he is born of God".

The new man being formed after the image of Christ, does not sin, because the Seed, the Word, remains within him. Though we may transgress, through the influence of the Old Man who refuses to be put to death (see Rom 7:20), we must seek to nurture that New Creation within us, watering it regularly with the Word, that it may grow to dominate our thoughts, that when the Old Man is finally put off for good, there may be found something within us worthy of

perpetuation, yielding fruits to the glory of the Father. Only be being born of the Spirit can we follow the Lamb into the sacrificial grave – and only by the final glorification at his hand, can we follow him into the glories of the ages ahead.

Christopher Maddocks

The Parable of Aholah and Aholibah

Ezekiel chapter 23 very graphically describes the position of Israel and Judah in terms of two married women, who committed adultery against their husband. Their symbolic names are given: Aholah which represents Israel, and Aholibah, which represents Judah. The meaning of their names is also significant: Aholah – "her tent" – i.e. not Yahweh's Tent, but hers that she set up herself. And Aholibah = "my tent is in her", evidently referring to how Jerusalem was the place where God symbolically dwelt amongst His people.

The aspect of Marriage being used to describe relationships with God is not unusual in Scripture. The prophet Jermiah uses similar imagery of how the people of God had become estranged from their God, by committing adultery against Him:

> "hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel ***committed adultery,*** I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but ***went and played the harlot also"*** (Jer. 3:6-8).

This is the theme of Ezekiel 23: two wives who wickedly departed from their husband. But the opening verses describe how that even when Yahweh brought them up out of Egypt, they did not forsake their idols:

> "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: and they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth … ***neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt …"*** (Eze. 23:2-3, 8).

This is demonstrated in Exodus 32, where Israel apostatised, and even Aaron was carried away with their dissimulation. Here, they made a golden calf – evidently after the pattern of the Apis Bulls, idols of Egypt. They forsook the God who had miraculously brought them through the Red Sea (Psa. 106:9),

and turned back to their Egyptian idols instead. There we see principles for our learning: "these things were our ensamples" (1 Cor. 10:6). Just as Israel were to leave Egypt behind, even so must those who are led by Messiah leave the idols of worldliness behind. Forsaking things that are past, we must be motivated to seek those things that are ahead, casting aside every sin and weight that might hinder our journey to the land of Promise.

AHOLA (SAMARIA)

Whilst other prophecies specifically speak against some of the sins of the people, Ezekiel 23 appears to focus on the alliances that they made with the surrounding nations – and thus forsook the alliance they had made with Yahweh. It is written that:

> "… And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted upon her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours … thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself." (vs. 5-7).

So it was that Ahola committed whoredoms with the Assyrians, and also worshipped their gods. The historical outworking of these things can be seen in a number of passages. Hosea 8:9 describes how "they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers …". Again, the Assyrian threat was taken away by bribing her with money:

> "… Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So they king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land" (2 Kings 15:19-20).

And again, 2 Kings 17:3 describes how that Hoshea the last king of Israel also bought peace:

> "Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents" (2 Kings. 17:3).

Israel then, trusted in their wealth for protection and defence, rather than their God. "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). The people were rather "destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6), and so did not receive life: "in the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria" (2 Kings 17:6), and the rest of the chapter describe the sins of Samaria, including idolatry, walking in the ways of the nations, and doing "secretly those things that were not right" (vs. 9).

Aholibah, on the other hand, saw what her sister was doing, and her punishment for it, yet did not learn the lesson! As Jeremiah has it, she "went and played the harlot also" (Jer. 3:8). Ezekiel describes her sin:

> "… she doted upon the Assryans her neighbours … and that she increased her whoredoms for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermillion … as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea …" (Eze. 23:see verses 13-17).

It is significant that "whoredom" and fornication is linked here with "images". It is also so in our days – worldly images can make a lasting impression upon the mind. Pornography is a trap that many fall into – images that lead to fornication. The servant of God must be aware of such, and remain holy to the Lord. Other images are used to stimulate covetousness and the accruing of this world's goods. Again, the servant of God must be aware of what such images can induce us to do.

The chapter continues to describe to us how that Aholibah prostituted herself with Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, after the pattern of her sister. Hence, she would also be judged:

> "I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. ***Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister;*** therefore will I give her cup into thine hand." (Eze. 23:30-31).

But neither Aholah, or Aholibah had deserted the worship of Yahweh. Rather, they combined it with false worship and abominable practices:

> "… for when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it: and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house" (Eze. 23:39).

This is the worst kind of apostasy – not a complete departure from the Truth, but a combining with worldly practices into the worship of Yahweh. This is something that we need to be aware of – spiritual prostitution is prolific in our age, as in the times of the prophets. James chapter 4 provides the instruction:

> "Ye ***adulterers and adulteresses,*** know ye not that ***the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*** Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4).

Notice the point that both Aholah and Aholibah were guilty of: seeking the friendship of the world – and committing adultery in order to accomplish this. But this doesn't work: we cannot serve God and Mammon, for to do so will compromise ourselves, and our standing before God:

> "no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Mat. 6:24).

SPIRITUAL PROSTITUTON

In our day, there is another spiritual prostitute – which like the two we have been considering, emerged from within the ecclesia itself. Revelation chapter 17 describes how that John was shown a harlot-woman:

> " … I will shew unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters … the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth …" (Rev. 17:see vs 1-6).

This woman is she "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication" (vs. 2). But she is not alone in her whoredoms – she has many daughters, being a "mother of harlots". Even so, the chief of the Roman religious system proclaims that she is "a mother, not sister" to the other churches.

However, the true ecclesia of Christ is different. The Apostle describes her state of readiness to meet the bridegroom:

> "… I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

But there is yet the danger that the ecclesia, like Israel of old, will lose her separateness, and fall into line with the other harlot daughters of Babylon. Hence Paul continued:

> "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtiltly, so your minds should become corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ …" (vs. 3).

Here is the warning, admonition and exhortation: the true Ecclesia of Christ must "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). We must be on our guard against those who would import worldly practices – and images – into our worship, and maintain our personal integrity in a day of evil. Not being self-righteous, but rather submitting ourselves to the righteousness of our God – and then we will find favour in His Sight at the coming again of His Son.

Christopher Maddocks

Galatians – An Overview

The New Testament portion of our daily readings for the last two days has brought us to consider the inspired Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians. It would seem appropriate therefore, to give an overview of the Epistle, pointing out it's main themes and features.

CHAPTER 1

The overriding theme of the Epistle deals with the issue of the Judaizers – those who insisted that as well as to believe in Christ, it is also necessary to be circumcised as per the law of Moses. In the first chapter, the Apostle refutes this notion, describing it as "another Gospel":

> "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ …" (Gal. 1:6-7).

Notice the terms used here, and contrast them with the prevailing spirit of our age. We live in an age which is in some respects like the times of the judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (cp Jud. 21:25). In today's parlance, everyone has their own "point of view" – they see and do things according to their personal viewpoint, which is of equal validity as that of the next man.

But the Bible never speaks in this way. Our Lord did speak of seeing or not seeing as thus:

> "the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole

> body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat. 6:22-23).

Notice this point: men are either in light, or in darkness. A man who is in darkness does not simply have a "different point of view" – according to Scripture, he is in the dark: he can have no point of view: he can't see anything! The situation is that the word of God is truth – and absolutely so: "Sanctify them through thy Truth: ***thy word is Truth"*** (Jno. 17:17) was the prayer of Messiah. Because God' Word is absolute Truth, that which differs from it is not truth. And being not truth, it is by definition false. Hence the Apostle in the chapter before us speaks of the Judaizers as preaching "another Gospel" – which in actual fact, is not another valid system of salvation: it is a perversion of what is true, and something that cannot save.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 describes the Apostle's approach to these "false brethren". They endeavoured to "bring us into bondage: ***to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour;*** that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4-5). There was an important work to be done by way of edifying the Ecclesias and proclaiming that which was right. There was no time to waste, especially on those who had already declared their hostility to the Apostle's work.

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah had a similar approach. There were those who sought to hinder the building of the House of God – the Temple – and they sought to engage Nehemiah in debating the issue – at least, that is what they said, in reality they sought the opportunity to do him harm:

> "Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying***, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you …"*** (Neh. 6:2-3).

Here is the point: it is different to speaking to someone who has a genuine desire to hear what the message is. But wasting time debating with those whose only goal is to do us harm will not further the cause of the Truth. Better to be like Paul and Nehemiah, and devote our time wisely in the Lord's service.

Another key phrase of Galatians chapter 2 is the apostles expression, ***"I am crucified with Christ:*** nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). And again in chapter 5, verse 24: "they that are Christ's ***have crucified the flesh*** with the affections and the lusts thereof". In passing through the waters of Baptism, we associate ourselves with the crucifixion and

resurrection of Messiah. We resolve to do what he did: to lay down our lives in service to Yahweh. So the Apostle describes elsewhere:

> "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? 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 … knowing this, that ***our old man is crucified with him …"*** (Rom. 6:3-4, 6 – see whole chapter)

"The flesh" is crucified with Christ, with all its resident affections and lusts – there is therefore no need to observe circumcision as under Law of Moses: "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). The cutting off the flesh in our day is being circumcised in heart, not in body.

CHAPTER 3

The main theme of chapter 3 is how the seed of Abraham are considered such, not because of physical descent, but by having the faith of Abraham: "even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that ***they which are of faith,*** the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:6-7). Indeed, we find that the promises that were given to faithful Abraham constitute the Gospel, which the Galatians were moving away from:

> "and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, ***preached before the gospel unto Abraham,*** saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8).

The blessings to come upon the nations will be through Abraham's promised Seed: "which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). But because being counted as sons of Abraham is based upon faith and not natural descent, the promises apply repentant faithful Gentiles, as well as Israel. So the apostle speaks of how:

> "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:14).

This chapter also describes to us the purpose of the Law of Moses:

> "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made …" (Gal. 3:19).

The Mosaic legal system then, was a code of conduct which regulated the behaviour of the people of Israel until Messiah came. It taught them what sin was and condemned any who did not keep it in all its particulars – something which no man could do. Hence the Apostle elsewhere describes it as being a "ministration of condemnation". It brought a knowledge of sin but could not remove it (Heb. 10:4, 11). In our chapter it is written:

> "… but the Scripture hath ***concluded all under sin,*** that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:22).

This was a function of the Law: by its condemnation of all who were under it, it demonstrated that man could not save himself. Those who would find forgiveness and reconciliation were taught by its sacrificial principles that their salvation could only come through one who would be the "Lamb of God" who would take away the sins of the world (Jno. 1:29). Hence the Law performed the role of a Tutor, or Schoolmaster, leading the faithful to Christ:

> "… wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, ***that*** we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 32:24).

Notice, the function of the Law was to bring us into a situation whereby we might be justified by faith: of itself, it could not save – it wasn't designed to save.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 returns to the theme of how the believers were looking back to the Law, rather than forward to Christ:

> "how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means, I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:9-11).

The Apostle then appeals to the Old Testament record to make an allegory:

> "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondmaid was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. ***Which things are an allegory:*** for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai , which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her

children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all …" (Gal. 4:21-26).

Here, we see how the literal events concerning the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, also form an allegory of events yet future to him. The comparison is that Ishmael represents the natural seed, whereas Isaac represents the children of promise – born from Jerusalem which is from above. The Apostle continues to describe how that just as Ishmael was cast out because of his hostility to Isaac, so in the events surrounding AD 70, natural Israel were to be cast out for their persecution of the believers:

> "… But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born of the spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? ***Cast out the bondwoman and her son:*** for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Gal. 4:29-30).

So we have re-emphasised the vital point that it is not the natural seed who are accounted the sons of Abraham, but the children of promise – those who are heirs to the promises made to him.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5 continues this theme, commending with the exhortation:

> ***"Stand fast therefore*** in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

The overriding message of this chapter is to follow the ways of the spirit, rather than the ways of the flesh:

> "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:16-18).

Again, earlier in this chapter, the point is made:

> "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself …" (Gal. 5:13-14).

Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:10). To walk after the Spirit of Christ, in love towards each other, is a hallmark of the disciples of Messiah. And those who walk after the Spirit will manifest the characteristics which are the fruit of the Spirit:

> "But ***the fruit of the Spirit*** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit …" (Gal. 5:22-24).

CHAPTER 6

But before yielding fruit, the seed must be first sown into the believer's heart – as per the parable of the Sower. Chapter 6 focusses our attention on this aspect:

> "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall ye also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting …" (Gal. 6:7-8).

We must therefore exert our energies to seeking first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and all other things we need will be added to us. (Cp. Mat. 6:33). Reaping what we sow, we need to ensure that the seed is good seed, and our hearts are receptive enough to receive it.

It is a characteristic of those of like precious faith, that they will help one another, bearing each other's burdens: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Or as the writer to the Hebrews has it:

> ***"wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and*** make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 13:12-13).

We need therefore, to lift each other's hands, and strengthen the feeble knees, so that together we shall inherit the glories of the Kingdom. We are not under the Mosaic code of conduct, but we do need to "fulfil the law of Christ" in order to be saved from our sins. Let us therefore manifest the spiritual fruits that comprise the characters of the faithful, and display that love and concern for each other, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Christopher Maddocks

The Raising of Lazarus

When we come to consider the work of Messiah, particularly his becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8), we tend to do so from the point of view of what benefits might be obtained by ourselves from what he did. How we can find forgiveness in the sight of the Deity by association with the death of Messiah, and how we can look forward to the future in hope, knowing that he who raised up Messiah from the dead can also raise us up in the likeness of his resurrection. We tend to look at the Sacrifice of Christ from the point of view of human salvation, and human benefits.

However, the salvation of men is merely a means to a greater end. The Psalmist was moved by the Spirit to write:

> "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; **that** glory may dwell in our land" (Ps 85:9).

From this, we learn that Salvation is extended to men for a purpose – that Yahweh's Glory may dwell in the land. Indeed it is the Father's Revealed Purpose to fill all the earth with His Glory:

> "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" (Num 14:21; Hab 2:14, cp Ps 72:19, Is 6:3).

It is the Father's purpose to ultimately populate the earth (Is 45:18) with an innumerable multitude (Rev 7:9) of immortalised men and women, who are his children, being the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:36), each of whom is in his likeness and image (Ps 17:15; cp Rom 8:29 with Heb 1:3; see Col 3:10, 1Jno 3:2). Showing forth His glorious attributes in a state of sinlessness and deathlessness, this global, raised population shall fill all the earth with the glory of Yahweh – as we have seen, as the waters cover the sea. So it is, that the salvation of men is but a part of the process by which Yahweh will be glorified, and the earth transformed from its present state of corruption and wickedness into a habitation for the Deity among men (Rev 22:3).

That being so, when we turn our attention to the ministry of the Master, we find that it was his purpose to glorify Yahweh among men. He prayed at the end of his ministry: *"I have glorified thee on the earth:* I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jno 17:4). The work that was given to Messiah to do, therefore, was to glorify Yahweh upon the earth. This means that the miracles which the Master performed, were not mere humanitarian gestures, healing the sick solely for their own individual benefit, but were also designed to give glory to his Father. And this we see in the example before us: the raising of Lazarus from the grave.

John chapter 11 opens with a description of how Lazarus was mortally sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha sent a message to the Master "saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, **but for the glory of God,** that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (Jno 11:3-4). The sickness then, was not that Lazarus might die, but was for the glory of God, and that Christ might be glorified. And this we see in the raising of Lazarus by Christ, for when he had commanded that the stone covering his grave be removed, Messiah said to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest **see the glory of God?"** (Jno 11:40). The glory of God was declared in the death and resurrection of Lazarus, for it declared the power of the Almighty to save, and foreshadowed the greater events to come to pass in the death and resurrection of Messiah himself. It caused many to believe in Jesus, and was a powerful testimony to the fact that he had power, even over the grave itself.

MARY AND MARTHA

Several highly interesting characters are involved in these events, most notably Lazarus of course, but also his two sisters, Mary and Martha. We first come across these women in the tenth chapter of Luke's inspired narrative, where we find that the Master had been received into their house. Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:39-42).

Here, we find that both women are preoccupied with the Master, one hearing his word, the other serving him, presumably by way of preparing a meal for both him and his disciples to eat. Martha was serving alone, and seems to have become somewhat flustered by this, and desired of the Master that Mary be taken away from him, to help her. However, the Master placed things into their proper context. There are many things to be done in life, and Martha was troubled about them all; but only one thing is really "needful" - which is to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. Mary had chosen the "needful" thing which would not be taken away by her having to go and help her sister. Here, Mary is portrayed as being at the place of learning, at the feet of Jesus (cp Deut 33:3), being instructed by him, and therefore receiving spiritual food. Martha, on the other hand, although being moved by admirable motives in wanting to do her best for her Master, nevertheless had her attentions drawn away from what the Master might do for her by way of instructing her, to what she might do for him. Her focus had shifted, and needed to be brought back by the Master. She needed to be corrected, that she might be ministered unto by him,

for his purpose was not to be ministered to by others, but to minister himself (Mark 10:45). The lesson for ourselves is clear: we must not become so distracted by the cares of this life that we neglect to hear the voice of Messiah. There is much to do in life; some things are needful, others are not. In fact, most are not, but that which is needful however busy and preoccupied we might find ourselves, is to give ear to the word of Messiah. He alone can save, and the Gospel he spoke is the power of God unto salvation.

LOVED OF THE LORD

This family at Bethany were loved by the Master. There are very few people in Scripture concerning whom it is said that the Master loved, but here are some of them: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (Jno 11:5). They were amongst the few in Israel who received him. For the most part, "his own received him not" (Jno 1:11), but here were a handful who delighted in his company, whom he himself had developed an affection for. He whom Jesus loved had fallen sick, and knowing of the miracles of healing that Jesus had performed in many parts of the land, Martha and Mary send to him: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (Jno 11:3).

Their trust in him was implicit, and in the end of the matter, was amply rewarded. The Master, upon hearing this message did not rise to go to them, but took the rather unusual step of remaining where he was for another two days: "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (Jno 11:6). What a trial this must have been for Jesus! He had the power to heal the one whom he loved, yet it was not yet the time to exercise that power. A greater miracle could be performed, and greater glory would be given to God, if his friend should die first, and be raised from the dead. This must have been a great trial indeed, to allow a loved one to die, in order that the power and glory of God could be shown later.

AWAKENING OUT OF SLEEP

The time came for the Master to go to Lazarus. He said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep" (Jno 11:11). The language here is taken from the prophecy of Daniel, and the 12th Chapter: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people … and many of them that **sleep** in the dust of the earth shall **awake** …" (Dan 12:1,2). Here was Michael – the one "who is like El" coming to awaken one who slept in the dust of the earth. The miracle was to be an earnest of the Kingdom – a shadow of greater things to come, when Messiah shall come to raise others, even his brethren whom he loves, to life eternal.

The disciples, however, did not perceive this allusion to their Scriptures, thinking that he meant merely a taking of rest in sleep, in which case it would be good for Lazarus. The Master therefore presented the matter plainly to them: “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him” (Jno 11:15). The miracle was to be a sign not just to the unbelieving Jews, but to the disciples also, that their faith might be increased. They did not yet understand that Messiah himself had to suffer before he could enter into his glory, and the events concerning Lazarus would have helped to prepare them for his death and resurrection.

The Master, with his disciples following, went towards Bethany where Mary and Martha lived, and where “many of the Jews” had gone to comfort them concerning their brother. “Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat in the house” (Jno 11:20). Here, the events are most instructive to ourselves. Martha, literally as soon as she knew that the Master was on his way, went out to meet him, without stopping to tell anyone else, even her sister. Again, we have a similar reaction on Mary’s part, as soon as she knew Jesus was coming: “as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him” (v 29). Both were ready to immediately go out to meet the Master, as soon as they knew he was near.

We are living in the age immediately prior to time when Messiah shall leave his place in a “far country”, having received for himself a kingdom, and come to raise his brethren from the dead. How will we respond in that great day, when the angelic voice announces to us that the Master is come? The seven wise virgins of Messiah’s parable were ready to immediately go out and meet him: “at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; *go ye out to meet him* … the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Mat 25:6,10). Here is the outworking of faith in a lifetime of waiting. To be ready at all times for the Master’s coming is difficult – especially for those whose lives are cluttered with the cares and troubles of this life - but needful, for we know neither the day nor the hour of his appearing. May it be that in that day to come, we will be found ready to leave all behind, to go out and meet our Master, as did Martha and Mary.

Upon greeting their Master, both the sisters uttered the same words, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (vs 21, 32). Here was their confidence in his ability to save; that had he been present, their brother would have been healed. Martha however, expresses a greater confidence in the Master, that even at this late hour all is not lost: “but I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee” (Jno 11:22). The Master tested her with the words: “Thy brother shall rise again”. But what could this

mean? Martha could hardly dare to presume to apply these words to the immediate circumstances. Her words in reply expressed a faithful anticipation for the future: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (v 23, 24). He replied with words that could only strengthen her conviction: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (v 26). He was the Resurrection – and the life! Here was the life-giver of Israel, the One through whom life eternal might come! Those who live and believe in him "shall never die in the age" (according to Bro Thomas' rendering of the Greek). Lazarus believed in him, so there was still hope for Lazarus! Did Martha believe this concerning the Master? "She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (v 27).

A CONFESSION OF FAITH

Martha declared the Master to be "the Christ, the Son of God". On another occasion, the Master asked his disciples to declare who they believed him to be. "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 16:16, 17). Flesh and blood cannot of itself reveal anything of the Spirit to any man, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God … neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Knowledge of such things must come from above, revealed by the Father though inspiration, direct instruction of the Son, or as in our case, through the Spirit-Word. Simon was especially blessed for his recognition of who Messiah actually was; and here we find Martha giving the same confession of her faith in him. She knew that Jesus was he of whom the prophets wrote, the Son of the Living God; and although she dared not presume that her present wish for her brother would be granted, she trusted in him that Lazarus would rise again at the last day.

What a remarkable understanding she had! Her sister, Mary, also showed a depth of understanding in the Master. The record informs us that she was "that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (Jno 11:2). She anointed the Master against the day of his burying (Jno 12:7), showing a most remarkable understanding that the Master himself must suffer before he could enter into his glory. Not even the disciples understood this – what a remarkable family this was who dwelt at Bethany! No wonder the Master loved them!

The Master went to the tomb, beholding the weeping of Mary, and of the Jews who accompanied her. Then we have the shortest, yet perhaps the most poignant verse of the Bible: "Jesus wept". "We have not an high priest which

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities …" (Heb 4:15), and here we behold the feelings of the Son of Man. The Master wept. But why? After all, he knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the grave again – why was it a time of sorrow for him? Perhaps it was that in Lazarus, he saw represented the dead state of the nation; that though he had power to revive it, and bring breath back into it's carcase (Mat 24:28), the Jews were too hardhearted to accept him. Perhaps it was the hypocrisy of those who wept with Mary, yet who were to rejoice at his own death. Perhaps it was that in the death of Lazarus, he saw his own death foreshadowed. Perhaps it was also his sharing the feelings of human infirmities, those whom he loved weeping at the loss of a loved one (Rom 12:15).

Being touched with the feeling of human infirmities, the Master wept at the graveside of his friend. Lazarus' body had been placed in a cave, with a stone lying over the entrance of it (Jno 11:38), which reminds us of the Master's own tomb. The Master, having come to the tomb gave the command for the stone to be removed. Martha, however, said to him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (v 39). Again, we see her becoming concerned with the practicalities of things, being over worried at natural things. The Master gently reminded her of their previous conversation when she had met him: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (v 40). Her seeing the glory of God was predicated upon her belief. It would only be so, if she *believed.* She was strong in faith, as the stone was removed. The Master lifted up his eyes, and prayed to his Father: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (v 42).

His purpose was that the Father be glorified, not he. This is why he made this prayer, that those standing by would know that the resurrection was by the power of the Father, who had heard the voice of His Son (cp 11:22). "And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go" (v 43, 44).

Notice the parallels and contrasts with the Master's own death and resurrection, which we come together each week to remember in the bread and in the wine. The stone was rolled away, that the resurrected Lazarus could come out. Even so was the stone removed in the Master's case – albeit by angelic hand. Contrary to Martha's expectation, the body of Lazarus had not seen corruption: it had been perfectly preserved for four days in anticipation of this miracle. Even so, the body of Jesus saw no corruption (Acts 13:35-37) for the three days it lay awaiting revival. But Lazarus came out of the grave still

bound by the bands of death – the grave clothes. He was still mortal, was still going to die at some point in the future. Whereas when the Master emerged from the grave, he did so to return there no more – he had achieved the victory over death, and so the graveclothes were folded up and left behind (Jno 20:6,7). The bands of death were loosed, for he could not be holden of the grave. He emerged to be given immortality, as being the firstfruits of them that slept. He is the resurrection, and the life.

We come then, to focus our attention upon our Master, as emblemised in the bread and in the wine. We have seen the depth of faith that both Mary and Martha had, a faith that was able to bring their brother back to life, for they both believed, and saw the glory of God. Yahweh was glorified in Lazarus' death and resurrection, for through it; many came to believe in Messiah. In this seventh 'sign' of John's Gospel, we have a declaration that Jesus is the keyholder of the grave (Rev 1:18); he has the power to resurrect those whom he chooses. And we look forward with great faith in him – with the faith of Martha, that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He is our hope and our salvation, and though we may yet descend into the dust of the ground before he comes, we will but sleep, awaiting the time of awakening at his appearing.

Christopher Maddocks

What are We Ourselves?

We cannot remember Christ scripturally or acceptably without remembering God, for it is written, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." It was that God might be manifest that he appeared. It was that the world might be reconciled to God that he came and died, and rose again. There is a great tendency in our age, where Christ is remembered at all, to remember Christ without remembering God. What praise there is of Christ is mostly fixed upon him alone. God is not seen. This is not according to Christ. Christ directs our attention to God. He came that we might be reconciled to God. So also Paul: he says, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." All the Scriptures exhibit God. God is their subject altogether. If they give us history, it is that God's part in it may be seen, and his ways illustrated as in the disobedience and affliction of the house of Israel. It was not that a story might be written. There are no "stories" in the Bible in the proper sense of that term. There is narrative of incident, and some the most thrilling ever put on record, but it always has to do with God in some way. If the Bible gives us poetry, it is all about God, as in the Psalms—never about the mere beauties of nature or the charms of human feeling as in human poetry. I need not say that if it gives

us prophecy, it is about God, because we all know that the ultimate exhibition of prophecy is the exaltation of God in all the earth.

What are we ourselves? If we are not deceiving ourselves, if we are not wasting our time, if we are not coming to this table in a mistaken character, we are children of God. If we are not children of God, it would be better that we should not come here. To come here in any other character is to come here unworthily; and Paul says that anyone eating and drinking unworthily incurs condemnation.

Now, here is one important matter to consider:—What makes us children of God? What entitles us to that description? There will be less difficulty in answering that question than in coming up to the answer. We must answer the question; and we must try and come up to it. That is the business we have in hand, as brethren and sisters of Christ, to grow up into the "fulness of the stature of Christ." Well, let us have the answer first. Children of God are those who know Him, and who love Him, and who obey Him, and who, therefore, have been adopted by Him in the operation of His institutions provided for that purpose.

If a man know God, God is before his eyes all the time; because God exists all the time, and therefore such a man is not a mere theologian. A theologian, in the ordinary sense, is a man who has a theory about God; a son of God is a man whose theory of God has become the root of warm and ever-present conviction. To such a man God, though unseen, is a real being—as real as his everyday friend. God is not only a real being to him, but, in a sense, the only real being, for he realises that God is the only inherently real Being. All other beings are but incorporate reflections of His being. Man seems real, but he is not permanently so. "There is none abiding." "All the glory of man," says the Scripture, "is as the flowers of the field" (1 Pet. 1:24). It withers and vanishes. All flesh is grass. The Scriptures say this, and we know it to be true by experience. We all perish. A son of God does not lean on grass. He leans on the only Rock, the power and life that in God are, from everlasting to everlasting—God. The world leans on man. The world is full of abominations just now, as the Apocalypse reveals. The world either openly blasphemes God or cants about Him. It is hard to say which is the worse. They are both odious. Of the two, perhaps the cant is the better; for in it there is at least a recognition of God, in however corrupt a form. In open blasphemy, there is the denial of him, out of which no good can come. But 10,000 times better than cant is sincere knowledge. The man who knows God does not "cant;" he speaks about God as he speaks about his friend. You can tell by the very tone where the matter stands in a man's feelings. If he is a very honest man and knows not God, he can scarcely pronounce His name. If he is not an honest man, he

speaks of Him in a tone and manner that tell you infallibly that God is a non-entity with him, and that he is merely anxious to be accredited by man with a fear of God that he does not possess. The man to whom God is a reality does not tone about it; he speaks about God with reverence truly but with the sincerity with which most men speak of a matter of common reality.

Consider some of the consequences. If a man know God, that man is purified and sanctified "Gravity and sincerity," become habit of speech with him. The truth has brought us out of a world not only of cant and ignorance, but of levity and corruption. Light talk and foul is the order of the day. From this the truth calls upon us to purify ourselves. Even "jesting and foolish talking" are among the things which Paul says are not to be "named among the brethren as becometh saints." We are in a little danger of missing this point from a special cause. Getting away from the cant about God, we are liable to drift into that barrenness of talk that has no odour of Him at all. This is as bad as cant. The love of God will be sure to make His presence manifest in our speech. Coming out of the fanatical sects, we are liable to go to just the other extreme, and to forget God. It is just as bad to know God and not to love Him as not to know Him at all.

Nothing in the universe is more powerful than love, though we are not allowed to know much of it just now. A man will do anything for love, abstain from anything for love. The man who loves God will show it by what he does and what he does not do. For God has made known His will to us, and those who love God delight to do His will. It is written of Christ, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:8; Heb. 10.); and we are remembering Christ acceptably if we do the same, for so Christ hath said, "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." These quiet words will remain the stern and everlasting measure of our final attainments, whether we forget them or not. A man who loves God will do His will, whether anybody know of it or not. Nay, he will prefer that others should not know. He remembers Christ's commandment, "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself, shall reward thee openly." The man who loves God will be found doing the right thing for God's sake—not man's. Such men are noble men. There will yet be a multitude of them in the earth, a noble multitude. We shall see them by-and-bye. God has not forgotten the earth, though it may seem so to a superficial view. The finish will show that he has remembered all the time, and had his eye all the time upon those who fear Him, and hope in His mercy. He will at last make up His jewels. They must be produced first. I suppose there are some kinds of precious stones that require darkness for their production, and the bowels of the earth for the workshop, and extreme pressure of heavy

weight, and the fire of intense heat to develop them. After a long time, men dig down and find them and bring them to the light, and show their sparkling colours. Tried and chosen men are compared to precious stones. They require days of evil and darkness for their preparation. The darkness does not prove forgetfulness but the reverse. It is part of the work. When the days of darkness have fulfilled their mission, the multitude of God's chosen will stand revealed, and they will prove to be those who have done the will of God for God's sake.

Such a character may seem to some to savour of cold independence. It has independence certainly, but not a cold one. A man of God is a warm man, but he certainly is an independent one. Surely this is necessary. We must not be influenced by man, but look straight to God. This is the independence. You may be influenced by human praise or censure to go off the right path. If you look to God, you will consider His will only.

The man who knows God is as unlike a merely natural man as this psalm is unlike a human poem. What is the theme of human poems? Merely human impression. It may be a fair maid—a lovely form of life no doubt, but a perishing fleeting thing. Or perhaps it is some smiling landscape; or some passing aspect of nature, such as a beautiful sunset. Bible poems, the Psalms for example, deal with nothing so limited or unimportant as this. They are all about God; they recognise God as the Root, the Rock, the Upholder, the Guide of all things. This is deep, eternal, and true. This is satisfying; it is enlarging; it is purifying. Holiness, says the Scripture, becometh thine house; all the Psalms are holy; all the Scriptures are holy. The Bible is well called "the Holy Bible"; it is a holy book. Everybody is made holy by reading it; that is every one who does so with diligence, earnestness, and effect. This is its mission as regards individuals: to make men holy; "to purify for Christ a peculiar people, zealous of good works" to whom Christ has left his command, "Be ye holy," and of whom Paul says "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Now, are we holy men? We are trying to be, and perhaps we are to some extent; let us not be satisfied with half-measures here. Jesus said to his disciples, "Now are ye clean through the words I have spoken to you." We can all feel the truth of that to a certain extent. I was made aware of it to a large extent when on board the Etruria lately. I felt that the weakest brother I knew was almost an angel compared with the odious creatures of the flesh with whom I was tabled on the return voyage. They were truly the swine, wallowing in the mire. Well, we are only washed hogs as yet. There is always a danger of that creature returning.

Let us not be like the Laodiceans, and rest contented with our attainments. You remember Christ's message to them. They had a high opinion of themselves. The Laodicean ecclesia said "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;" but Jesus says "thou art wretched and miserable

and poor and blind and naked." Let us never indulge in self-glorification. We are likely to deceive ourselves; let us always resist the tendency to think well and brag well. Let our estimate be not as to how we look in mortal eyes, but how we look when compared with the "holy angels." We will be safe in comparing ourselves with them. We are not safe in comparing ourselves with human swine. Don't let us look at the unwise mob and say "Well we are much better than they are." The people that surround the Prince of Wales might say that; are they good enough for God? Goodness as God reckons is goodness towards Him. Goodness towards man is second. We know that the world is not good towards God. It knows Him not: believes Him not: obeys Him not. Are they fit to be promoted to equality with the angels? Those only are who are now "an holy priesthood, a peculiar people."

We can form an opinion of our standing if we imagine ourselves about to enter the presence of Christ, or dying. This is doing what Paul commands, when he says, "Let us judge our own selves." The man who is good enough for God is the man who is covered with God's righteousness in Christ, and who walks after the commandments, and which require holiness. It is written, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," that is everything—in behaviour, in practice, in habit of life God himself says, "Be ye holy for I am holy." Let us fix our minds on it and ask what does it mean? It must have a meaning. Do we not instinctively know the meaning? Is not holiness that which is pure, that which is clean, that which is undefiled. Is it not so? And if we are to be holy "in all manner of" ways, are we not to be so? Are we to be undefiled in some things and not in others? why is it necessary to be so explicit? Because the world is reeking with unholiness of every kind, and being in the world, we are liable to be infected with its ways.

The world is to be judged with terrible judgment when Christ comes. That judgment we are invited to administer, if meanwhile we become what the world is not: what the truth is designed to make us—a purified people, an holy people, "a peculiar people," not a cold people but a zealous people, "zealous of good works." There is perhaps a cold holiness. This is not the sort. A zealous holiness is godly holiness—zealous of good works. Good works consist of doing that which is good according to God's rule. Man is no judge here. Some works are good by the Divine rule which are bad by the human rule. Preaching the "narrow" way, "contending earnestly for the faith," is bad according to modern man, but good according to the commandments of God. Things are good according to man which are bad according to God—sparing Agag, to wit, by Saul; holding your tongue about religion in our day, according to etiquette. There are many other examples.

We must have God's rule for the estimate of good works, of which we are to be zealous. When people are zealous, their hands don't hang lazily and helplessly down. They are prompt and active and earnest. And as it is an earnestness about what the natural mind has no affinity for, they are considered mad by merely natural men of every kind and variety. Well, this is not nice, especially as there is such a thing as religious madness. Are we going to be scared out of zeal for good works, because there is such a thing as religious madness? No, no. There is such a thing as that which is holy, and just, and good and true and the truly sane and enlightened mind will hold on to this with all the heart and mind, and soul and strength—whatever odium it may bring. Remember what Christ says: "What have they said about me?" "He hath a demon, and is mad, why hear ye him?" What have they called me? Beelzebub. If they so speak of me, what are you to expect? If we are going to be called mad because we strive after holiness, let us count it an honour, as he said, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household. Fear them not therefore" (Matt. 10:24, 26).

Let us give this a special application this morning. A brother has asked me to say something about smoking. Surely these principles touch the question. I don't care to go into it particularly, but one or two simple questions seem to me to settle it Putting it in its mildest way — Is it not possible that Christ will consider this practice (only about two or three hundred years old) an unholy thing? Is it not certain that he will have no fault to find with those who do not smoke, so far as that goes? The abstaining from it cannot be wrong; the indulgence in it may be, and by the general rules of apostolic holiness doubtless is. Nature itself teaches us something in the matter, and Paul appeals to "nature itself" in some matters. Smoking is against nature, for who can smoke for the first time without being made sick, and what healthy person can come near a person reeking with narcotism without physical loathing? Let us put it extremely by way of test: imagine a whole ecclesia sitting in clouds of tobacco smoke! Why not if it is right? An ecclesia can meet for tea or for dinner: why not for smoking if it be a holy thing? There are other arguments against it, but time does not allow. All the world smokes. This is an argument against it: for the world knows not God and is odious to Him and ripening for judgment. It is our part, having come out from among them to be holy in all manner of conversation—partaking not of their sins, that we receive not of their plagues.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian, 1888
Page 205–209.

Notes on the Book of Revelation (5)

Dr Thomas Translation:
Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lords Day continued:
Rev 1: 15 And his feet like unto incandescent brass, as if they had been glowing in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

Revelation 1	Comments
15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;	Brass = Copper which is an element, same for the Brazen Serpent. "Like incandescent brass. 'Beautiful feet 'walk through the earth with the gospel of peace Rom.10:15; Isa.52:7. Wrathful feet tread the wine-press of the wrath of God 'tread down the wicked '& break in pieces the nations see Rev.19:15; Isa.63:3; Mal.4:3; Mic.4:13. For the sig. of brass in relation to flesh & the altar of sacrifice, see the Tabernacle in the Wilderness." **(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4)** Incandescent = Glowing with heat "**The feet of the Multitudinous Christ**… The idea primarily suggested by feet are a treading upon & an advancing toward anything, or after anything… (see Rev14:20 And the winepress was trodden without the city)… The feet, in the next place, are symbolized *in brass* to connect them with the temple-pattern of heavenly things…. **The Brazen Altar was "most holy**," so that whatever touched it was holy; …. **The Altar of Burnt offering prefigured the One Body in sacrificial manifestation. The idea of an altar of sacrifice representing a personal, and divine plurality, is frequent in scripture**… (Gen 33:20… This *Yahweh-nissi altar* was superseded by an altar overlaid with plates of brass. These plates represented **"the flesh of sin" purified by fiery**

	trial…The saints, then, are the Feet of incandescent Brass, who have all passed through the fire… …"incandescent brass" of the Son of Man, or Israel in the Spirit, in glowing, or burning, operation upon the subjects of YAHWEH'S fiery indignation. As to the *furnace* in which this intense glowing wrath of Deity is to glow, we may state it in the words of Ezekiel as *"the Wilderness of the Peoples."* **(Dr Thomas Eureka Vol.1 Pg 174-181)**
and his voice as the sound of many waters.	Re 17:15 "And he saith unto me, **The waters** which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, **are peoples, and multitudes, and nations**, and tongues." Ezk 1:24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like **the noise of great waters**, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. Re 19:6 And I heard as it were **the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters**, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. "showing that the symbolic 'one like unto the Son of Man 'represents a multitude. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea'. The purified nations are like 'a sea of glass 'Rev.15:2. 'The waters…are peoples 'ch.17:15. But these waters are saved peoples 'redeemed from the earth 'ch.14:2,3." **(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4)**

Dr Thomas Translation

Vision Of The Son Of Man In The Lords Day continued:

Rev 1:16 And having in his right hand Seven Stars; and out of his mouth a sharp double-edged longsword proceedeth and his aspect as the sun shineth in his strength

Revelation 1	Comments
16 And he had in his right hand seven stars:	"explained to represent the 'angels 'of the ecclesias, that is. the men sent of God to guide and direct them. Another evidence that it is not the Lord Jesus personally that John sees. A real person would have had the sword in the hand like 'the captain of the Lord's host 'before Jericho Josh.5:13. The word of the Lord will command the sword of judgment in the day of his coming. 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, & with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked 'Isa.11:4. Comp. Rev.19:15." **(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4)**
and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword:	**Psa 149:6-9** Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; **To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.** **Rev 19:15** And out of **his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations:** and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **Isa 11:4** But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall **smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.**
and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.	**Countenance = Aspect** **Strength = Power** "Not merely his face, his opsis, 'whole appearance ' Rotherham, 'glance '(Weymouth), 'general external aspect of the whole figure 'Dr.T. Comp. the Transfiguration, & the words of Jesus, 'then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father 'Matt.13:43. He is 'the Sun of Righteousness', & they are to be 'like him'. His brightness was above that of the sun when he

	revealed himself to Saul of Tarsus. His aspect was 'very terrible'. Sun-scorching is a figure of tribulation, whether for the saints or for their enemies ch.7:16, 16:8,9." **(CCW Notes on the Apocalypse page 4-5)** Zec 14:5-9 "Now, according to this arrangement, Zechariah testifies, saying, that when the Mount of Olives shall be rent asunder by an earthquake, "YAHWEH, my Elohim, shall come in, all the Saints with thee. And it shall be in that day there shall be no brightness—the Splendid Ones shall draw in; and it shall be one day that shall be known to YAHWEH, not day nor night; and it shall be at the time of evening there shall be brightness. * * * And YAHWEH shall be for King over all the earth. In that day there shall be ONE YAHWEH, and his *Name One*"—Zech. 14:5–9. The "Splendid Ones" of this passage are the Elohim, or Saints, who will not shine forth in the brightness of their glory until the time of evening; then, when the kingdom is restored to Israel, they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, as Daniel, Zechariah, and Jesus have foretold." **(Dr Thomas Eureka Vol.1 Pg.187)** See Also Psa 19:4-6

(Compiled by the St Helen's Ecclesia)

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