

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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“This Thing is From Me
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“This Thing is From Me”

Statements such as this, made by the Lord to his people, should bring home to us with blessed reality the fact that everything which concerns us is of even greater concern to the Lord-that he is just as interested in our personal welfare as we, and eminently more qualified to know what is best for us. This is the reassuring lesson which Jesus gives us, “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6, 7).

The Apostle Paul expresses the same comforting thought when he tells us all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called in keeping with the divine purpose (Romans 8:28). The apostle knew this because of the many promises of God indicating his love and care for his people. He knew it also because, by the eye of faith, he was able to discern that even his greatest trials had often resulted in the richest of blessings -blessings which could never have been enjoyed if not for the trying circumstances which brought them.

Our faith in God and in his providence should enable us to realize that nothing can come to us except by divine permission, and that many times our most painful experiences are actually by his appointment. If we can but have confidence that this is so, our every joy will be a deeper joy, and our burdens and sorrows will be borne with greater fortitude. For we will know that our all-wise Heavenly Father sees exactly what we

need for our training in order that we may be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

TEMPTATIONS?

Do we have temptations? Well, the Lord knows about them. He does not lead us into temptations, for God tempts no man (James 1:13). But he knows about our temptations, and permits them, and we have the assurance that when they become too great he will provide a way of escape perhaps not our way, but a way which will be much better suited to our eternal welfare than any of our own choosing could possibly be (1 Corinthians 10: 13). So, at such times, the Lord might very well be saying to us:

“I want you to know that, when the enemy comes in like a flood, this thing is from Me, and that I have permitted it in order that you might realize more fully your own weaknesses, and learn to depend more confidently upon My grace to help in your every time of need (Hebrews 4:16). I want you to learn that your safety as a new creature in Christ depends upon your looking to Me for strength”

To have faith that God's hand is in all our affairs, it is essential to keep in mind that he is training us for the great work of the future, and for that high position of joint heirship with his Son, King Jesus. One of the necessary lessons to learn in order to be qualified for this exalted office is that of humility, and it may be that the Lord will use very common-place experiences to teach us humility. To those of us who need such an experience, the Lord may be saying:

“Are your surroundings in life such as are humiliating to bear? Has your lot been cast with people who do not appreciate you, nor understand you; people who never consider your preferences, nor your tastes, and who are always putting you in the background, and themselves in front? Do not blame your associations, this thing is from Me. I am with you in all your humiliations, helping you to bear them and from them, to learn the needed lessons.”

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES?

Again, to some of us the Lord may be saying “Are you in financial difficulties? Are you finding it more and more difficult to make both ends meet? This thing, too, is from Me, for I want you to put your trust more fully in Me and to realize that I know exactly what is best for you. I am endeavoring to teach you to trust in Me and in My ability to provide all your needs; and to have a joyful acquiescence in your lot in life which I am permitting, for this thing is from Me.”

SORROW?

Are we passing through a nighttime of sorrow, due to the loss of some beloved one, or to circumstances which seemingly no one can understand? Again we hear the Lord saying:

“This thing is from Me. I have permitted earthly comforters to fail you in order that you might learn to look to Me for consolation. Perhaps you have not realized-but I have -that as long as you had all your dear ones with you and your trusted friends were always able to console you in your trials, you didn't think of Me very often. I have wanted to do more for you, to bless you more richly, but you were getting along so well, your life was so filled with your friends, and you were so satisfied with your successes, that I was largely shut out

of your thoughts and ways. You didn't realize your need of Me. I want you to know that I am your everlasting portion, and I want you to draw nigh to Me in order that I might draw nigh unto you" (James 4:8).

FALSEHOODS?

Has someone circulated falsehoods about us, belittling our abilities perhaps, or even misrepresenting our characters? The Lord permits these experiences also, for they are among the all things which, by his overruling, are working together for our good. From this standpoint, therefore, he might very well be saying: "Leave those who misrepresent you to Me. I will deal with them according to their responsibility in the matter. There is a lesson in this experience, a lesson which I want you to learn. It is another way in which you can learn the much needed lesson of humility - Christlike humility. When Jesus was contradicted, yes, even when he was reviled while hanging on the cross, he reviled not again, committing himself rather into My care and keeping; and this is what I want you to do"

OUR OWN PLANS

Even though we have covenanted to do the Heavenly Father's will, we sometimes go along from day to day making our own plans, and neglecting to take into consideration whether or not our plans are in harmony with his will. Of course we want him to bless the plans we make, and if he does not, then we wonder why. Again let us hear the voice of the Lord, for he may be saying to us:

"Have your plans been all upset? This thing is from Me. It was well that you asked Me to bless your plans, but in your consecration to Me you expressed your determination to do My will, to follow the plans that I would make for you. I have been ready at all times to direct your steps, but often you have not given Me an opportunity to do so, and now that your own arrangements are not working out so well, I want you to know the reason, and try to do the better way, that is, to consult Me with respect to every detail of your life. I can assure you that when you do this, My blessing will make you rich-rich in peace and joy, and in the realization that I am ever by your side, and that I will withhold no good thing from you as long as you walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

BURDENED WITH CARE?

All of the Lord's people are, at one time or another, burdened with responsibility and loaded down with care. We are prone to worry about the outcome of this experience, or the result of that effort. Under this burden of care, we are apt to wonder why we do not have the joy and peace in the Lord that once enriched our lives. And then, despite all our care and worry, something goes wrong, and we are crushed in spirit. In our distress we turn to the Lord, and through his Word hear him say:

"This thing is from Me. I have been telling you right along that you should cast all your care upon Me, for I am abundantly able to take the responsibility for the successful outcome of every service I ask you to render for Me (1 Peter 5:7). Not only do I want you to ascertain My will with respect to all the affairs of your consecrated life, but doing this, to let Me also be responsible for the outcome. The outcome of your every experience, and the result of your every effort to serve Me, may not be as you would desire; but you can be confident that, under the overruling of My providence, all things will work together for your good and for My glory."

SERVICE

Every truly consecrated child of God is alert to serve him and his people in any and every way possible. Those who do not desire to be active in his service may very well doubt the genuineness of their consecration. However, for many the opportunities of service often seem quite limited. We long to do more for the Lord than we are doing, or have the opportunity to do. It may be through lack of physical strength; or it may be due to obligations toward those for whom the Lord expects us to care; it may be financial inability, or other handicaps. Do we, then, wonder why it is that, although our hearts long to do much in the Lord's service, we are deprived of the opportunity? In this experience also, the Lord may very well be saying to us:

“This thing is from Me. I know of your desire to do some great work for Me, and yet I have permitted you to be laid aside on a bed of weakness and pain, for there is a lesson in this which is most essential for you to learn. Deep down in your heart, why are you so anxious to be busy in My service? Is your motive entirely that of love for Me, for the brethren, and for all who may be blessed at your hands through the ministry of the truth? It is well that you examine yourself very carefully along this line. And there is no better time to do this than while you are laid aside from active service. If there is the slightest trace of a motive in your heart that is not unselfish and pure, prosperity in My service would be very injurious to you, and I love you too much to permit you to be injured.

“This experience of waiting, which you are now having, will help you to realize your own weakness, and your great need of Me. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness, but only if you realize your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). When you come to the point where you tremble when you think of self, and realize how very little you can do for Me in your own strength, then I will be able to use you for doing great things for Me-if not this side of the veil, then surely when I have exalted you to glory to reign with My beloved Son. “And if, in My providence, it takes all your time and strength and means to meet your responsibilities toward those depending upon you, this thing is from Me, too. If you discharge your responsibilities as unto Me, I will accept your service as though it were done directly in My vineyard. I know that in your heart you want to render direct service to Me, and that is proper. But keep alert; it may be that the time will come when I will open the way for you to serve Me in more direct ways. Watch and pray lest you settle down into a life of worldly indifference simply because at present you are deprived of the privilege of working directly for Me. “If, in your case, it is a matter of wishing that you had large sums of money you could devote to My service; well, I appreciate that, but what are you doing with that little bit you do have? I have been saying over and over again to My people that those who are faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much (Luke 16:10). After all, dear child of Mine, My most important consideration for you is that you prove faithful, and you can do that with a few pennies just as well as though you possessed a large fortune which could be devoted to My service.”

GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES

The Lord's providences over his people are truly marvelous. Frequently those who have had little or no opportunity for service suddenly find that glorious privileges in the harvest open up before them. Those who have had small opportunities are granted larger ones. Those incapacitated by illness may recover. Family responsibilities may lessen. Some who possess little of this world's goods may acquire more which they can use for the Lord. These changes of circumstances should also be accepted as coming from the Lord; so again we hear him saying to us:

“This thing is from Me. When you were weak and ill, you felt your need of Me; but now that you are strong and well, you need Me more than ever; so do not now neglect to acknowledge Me in all your ways, and look to Me to direct your path and give you strength to walk in it. The service which you rendered to those dependent upon you was important, but now that you are serving Me directly you will need My guidance and blessing even more than before; for the simple reason that you will be handling the holy things of My Word and plan. And if you may now have more money to spend for Me, take heed lest you come to feel that your money should buy you special privileges of honor and authority among My people. Watch also lest you rest in the thought that your money is all I want. Above everything else, from you - as from all My children - I want the affection of your heart. I want you to keep close to Me and to be very attentive to all of My instructions. I want you to tremble at My Word, not in fear of what I might do to you, but because you are anxious lest a promise being left you of entering into a full rest of faith in the doing of My will, you should even seem to come short of it (Hebrews 4:1).

“I am your Father, too, your Heavenly Father, and everything that concerns you, My child, concerns Me. My love is yours for your comfort and joy. My infinite wisdom is yours to direct all your steps. My almighty power is pledged to your support, to help you over all the rough places in your heavenly journey, to defend you against all your foes, and to strengthen you in all your weaknesses. And just remember, dear child of Mine, that I will withhold no good thing from you, and that I always give My very best to those who leave the choice with Me (Psalm 84:11). Blessed are all they who put their trust in Me” (Psalm 2:12, 34:8)

LITTLE TO SAY

Reassuring indeed are the Lord's words, as he talks to us out of the Scriptures. Perhaps one of the important lessons we should learn from his messages is that when we fellowship with him, it is best that we have little to say ourselves. If it is important that all the world keep silent before him (Zechariah 2:13), it is even more so for us, his children. Our heavenly Father is, however, pleased for us to express our devotion to, and love for him, to reiterate our longing desire to please him, and to keep near to him. How appropriate that we should say:

*“Sun of my soul, my Father dear,
I know no night when thou a7t near.
O! may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide thee from thy servant's eye.*

*“Shield of my soul, tho' tempests rage
And 'gainst me hosts of foes engage,
My refuge and my fortress thou,
Before thee ev'ry foe must bow.’*

- Norman Woodworth

An Angel or An Eagle?

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound” (Revelation 8:13, King James Version)

This curious close to the record of the fourth trumpet is rendered differently in other versions (for example NASB, NIV, Wilson Diaglott, Marshall Diaglott, Rotherham). Rather than an angel coursing through heaven with this dire message, it is an eagle. The cause of the difference is a textual variation among Greek manuscripts. “Instead of [eagle] (which is decisively supported by Sinaiticus, Alexandrian ... and most minuscules) the Textus Receptus ... reads [angel]. The substitution may have been accidental ... but more likely was deliberate since the function ascribed to the eagle seems more appropriate to an angel [for example Revelation 14:6] “ (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Bruce M. Metzger)

I think eagle is correct. But what sense does it convey?

The answer comes from two passages in the Old Testament.

(1) Deuteronomy 28. In verses 1 to 14 God explains the profuse blessings Israel will receive for obedience to Him. Verses 15 to 68 explain in detail the punishments sure to come for disobedience. It is in this section that Moses says “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the **eagle flieth**” (verse 49).

(2) Centuries later, Hosea predicted this impending judgment to faithless Israel. “Set the **trumpet** to thy mouth. He shall come as an **eagle** against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law” (Hosea 8:1). This prophecy came in the days of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah” (1:1), and the enemy which was the “rod” of God's anger against his covenant people then was Assyria (Isaiah 10:5). No doubt the prophecy had an even fuller application when Israel was later subdued under the Romans, who sometimes used the eagle as their emblem.

The meaning in Revelation 8:13 draws from this usage. As God's natural people transgressed, so his spiritual people transgressed. The first four trumpets, marking the same span as the first four churches, saw the full development of the Christian apostasy. The message to Thyatira, the fourth church, referred to Jezebel (Papacy) seducing “my servants to commit [spiritual] fornication, and [spiritually] to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (3:20). This was a time when the “depths of Satan” were experienced by the church (3:24). The woman had leavened the three measures of meal thoroughly by this time. (Matthew 13:33, the fourth of the seven parables of the Kingdom.)

It was time for judgment against faithless Christendom. The flying eagle, emblematic of God's retribution against a wayward people, cried with a loud voice “woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the [nominally Christian] earth” Those three woes are trumpets 5, 6, 7. The trumpets are therefore logically divided into the first four, tracing the rise and entrenchment of Papacy, and the last three, tracing her weakening and demise. Notice that the first four trumpets are briefly described, while the last three are given at substantially greater length and detail. This strengthens the grouping of the first four as distinct from the last three. The seven

seals of chapters 6 and 7 were segregated similarly. The first four seals give us the vision of the four horsemen, tracing the decline and corruption of Christian doctrine. In the last three seals the descriptions are of a different order, and given us in greater length and detail, just as with the trumpets.

When we examine the details of trumpets 5, 6, 7 we indeed do find the “woe, woe, woe” predicted upon Christendom by the flying eagle.

Woe 1: Reformatory doctrines like locusts are freed from their dormant condition. They are loosed by the “star” fallen from heaven to earth, perhaps Luther who was excommunicated from the ecclesiastical heavens, but became of great influence among the Christian earth class. These doctrines inflicted much distress in Christendom, but of course did not hurt any who had “the seal of God in their foreheads” (Revelation 9:4).

Woe 2: From the great river Euphrates, which supported Papacy for so long, four angels were loosed for a great destruction. This woe struck when Papacy's 3 1/2 times were coming to a close (Revelation 10:6 cf Daniel 12:7). At this time one of the ten toes, France, “the tenth part of the city” of Christendom, fell in a great earthquake-revolution, and Papacy fell with her (Revelation 11:13). Though Papacy recovered, her power to crown the state heads of Europe was lost forever.

Woe 3: The seventh trumpet, our day in history. “The Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ” (cf Revelation 22:1). It is now the time for the saints and (gospel age) prophets to be rewarded, the angry nations subdued, and the corrupters of the Christian earth (Babylon) to be destroyed once and for all (Revelation 11:18, 19:2). This work has been progressing through the harvest, and will climax with Armageddon.

- *David Rice*

The Philosophy of Atonement

The Apostle Paul is noted as a great logician. In few places is this more exhibited than in the fifth chapter of Romans, specially in verses 16-21.

To get the background we will begin this study in verse 12. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” This is a simple statement of the hereditary nature of sin. In verses 13 and 14 Paul distinguishes between subjective and objective sin.

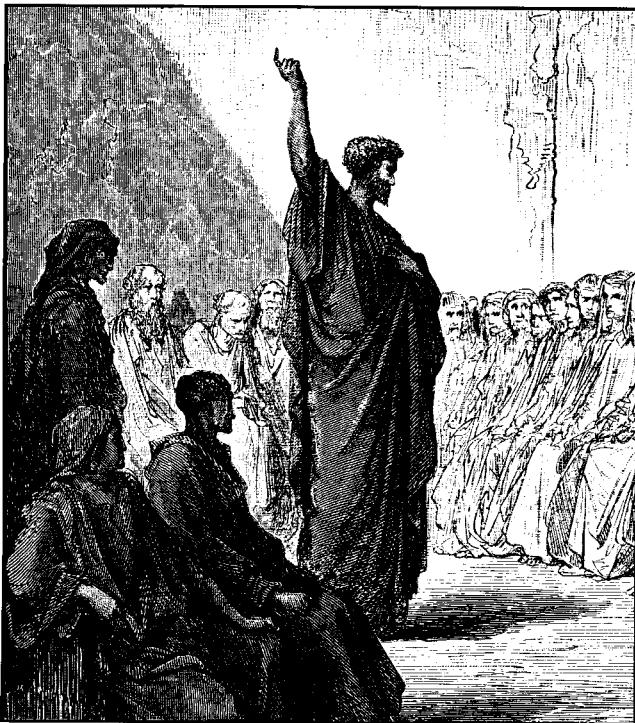
“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come”

Though the law identified sin, the fact of sin was a reality from the time of Adam's original transgression in the Garden of Eden. The NIV gives an interesting interpretive rendering for the phrase “after the similitude of Adam's transgression” It reads “even over those who did not sin by breaking a command” In other words, death was the equal consequence for both willful sins and those attributed to ignorance or Adamic weakness. Verse 15: “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto

many.” Here Paul begins to zero in on his main subject, a contrast between original sin and the act which brings redemption. Although the ransom, *anti-lutron*, is a corresponding price, a perfect life for a perfect life, Paul is emphasizing the **differences** between the redemption and the sin it atones for. The original was of one man, the atoning act covered the sins of many. The original sentence was for one act of disobedience, the atonement covers a multitude of transgressions.

A FINE DISTINCTION

The next three verses are the heart of Paul's analysis of sin atonement. However the fine logic is diluted by the various English translations of these verses. The word translated “justification” in verse 16 is not the same word translated “justification” in verse 18 but is the same as the word translated “righteousness” in verse 18.



Paul the Logician

A still different Greek word is translated “righteousness” in verse 17. To illustrate this confusion we will quote these verses below, inserting a transliteration of the Greek words in question.

“And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification [*dikaioma*]. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness [*dikaiousune*] shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness [*dikaioma*] of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification [*dikaiosis*] of life.”

Of the three words, *dikaiousune* is easiest to identify. In the words of W. E. Vine, it means “the character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled “rightwiseness” which clearly expresses the meaning.”

The distinction between *dikaioma* and *dikaiosis* is not as easy to determine. Lexicographers disagree among themselves. Vine says *dikaioma* represents the “expression and effect of *dikaiosis*.” Writing in 1858, J. A. Bengel says just the opposite. “*Dikaioma* is, so to speak, the material substratum, the foundation for *dikaiosis*, justification; obedience, righteousness fulfilled. It may be called justifiament *Yustificamentum*), the ground and material of justification.” Both agree that the two are related as cause to effect. They just disagree on which is cause and which is effect. Paul's statement in verse 18 of justification (*dikaiosis*) being the result of the righteousness (*dikaioma*) of one seems to strongly support the contention of Bengel.

THE FIRST ADVENT

With this background let us now look at verse 16. “And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification The contrast is drawn between the original sin which was one act and the free gift of the ransom which covered a multitude

of transgressions. This free gift was not justification, but the merit (*dikaioma*, justification, basis) which would result in making all men righteous when applied. The work of Calvary was to provide the ransom basis for justifying the human race.

THE SECOND ADVENT

The application of this free gift is referred to in verse 18. “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The work of the second advent-effecting actual justification (*dikaiosis*)-will result from the free gift of righteousness (*dikaioma*) **coming** upon all men.

The application of Christ's merit will result in universal resuscitation of the dead. “All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth.” (John 5:29). But this is only the beginning of the atonement work. Resuscitated mankind will need instruction in righteousness in order to maintain their salvation.

This work is referred to in verse 19. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous [*dikaios*, the root word for the ones treated above]” “ This describes the educational process of the kingdom, “**being made righteous.**”

THE GOSPEL AGE

The two advents of Christ are separated by a long period of time -the Gospel Age. The work of this age is referred to in verse 17. As verse 17 falls between 16 and 18, so the Gospel Age comes between the first and second advents.

Verse 17 reads “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive **abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness [*dikaiosune*] shall **reign** in life by one, Jesus Christ” “ Here we find the correct word for righteousness, for it is Christ's perfections that are being emphasized. The highlighted words in the text are the author's for emphasis. These terms are peculiar to the church. The bride of Christ receives not only grace, but an **abundance** of grace. They shall not only live, they shall **reign** in life.

This work with the church during the present time requires not only the ransom for their justification but also the sin offering for their daily shortcomings.

THE JEWISH AGE

Verse 20 is a flashback to the Jewish Age. “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” The particle *de* here translated “moreover” is usually rendered “but;’ introducing an antithesis or contrast (see Vine's Dictionary). Having outlined the workings of the grace of salvation through Christ, Paul reverts to his main subject, the contrast of the law and the gospel. The law identified wrongdoing as sin, thus making sin “abound” But grace was more than equal to the task. It not only redeemed the gentiles under Adamic condemnation, it also removed the additional “curse of the law” which condemned Israel.

Paul wraps up his discussion in verse 21. “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness [*dikaiosune*] unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” Now the completeness of the atonement is shown. The reign of sin and death will be replaced by the reign of life and righteousness. This life will be obtained through the use of both the ransom and the sin offering, the application of Jesus' perfections (*dikaiosune*) producing in all men their own righteousness (*dikaiosune*), which will enable them to maintain that life.

DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH

In summary, verses 16-21 outline the philosophy of redemption age by age.

Verse 16 shows the work of the first advent, providing the basis for justification, the ransom.

Verse 17 outlines the use of that free gift in abundance so that the church may reign in life.

Verse 18 refers to the second advent when the merit will be applied to all, justifying all men.

Verse 19 speaks of the educational work of the kingdom, by which men can maintain life.

Verse 20 comments on the object of the law, identifying sin. The “curse of the law” is removed by Christ.

Verse 21 completes the picture by showing how men maintain salvation by developing their own personal righteousness.

VOLUME FIVE FOREWORD

Paul's message to the Roman brethren is a basis for the conclusions expressed in the foreword to Volume 5 (page ii -Eii) of *Studies in the Scriptures*. “Now we see that our Lord Jesus left the Heavenly glory that He might accomplish a ransoming work for Adam and his race. We see that his change of nature from a spirit to a human being was with a view to enabling him to be the Ransom price -a perfect man for a perfect man -*Anti-lutron* -a corresponding price. We now see that Jesus gave himself a Ransom-price for all at the time of his consecration at thirty years of age at Jordan. He continued in giving the Ransom-price, that is, in laying down His life, which in due time would constitute

a Ransom-price for Father Adam and his race. He finished his work of laying down His life, surrendering it, sacrificing it, permitting it to be taken from Him, when He on the cross cried: 'It is finished!' Nothing more could be laid down than was there laid down - a Ransom, a corresponding price, for Father Adam. But it was not paid over as a price in settlement of Adam's account, else Adam and the entire sinner race would then and there have been turned over to Jesus. The price was merely laid in the hands of Divine Justice as a deposit, to the credit of the One who had died, that He might apply it later in harmony with the Divine Plan. Our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead a spirit being of the Divine nature, as a reward for His faithfulness and loyalty to God in surrendering His earthly life sacrificially. 'Him hath God highly exalted ... above every name'

- *Carl Hagensick*

The Parousia

The promise “I will come again” (John 14:3) has been associated -and rightly so -with the Scriptural foreview of the end of this Age and the winding up of affairs of this world preparatory to the inauguration of the new world order centered in Christ. There still remains some faith in medieval ideas of a twenty-four hour Day of Judgment, the annihilation of the earth, the immediate and final condemnation of sinners, and so on, in connection with this “coming again:” but Christian thought is increasingly tending towards a more rational and satisfying view of the purpose of the Second Advent. More and more it is being accepted that the Lord Christ comes for the purpose of eradicating evil from human society by a process of evangelism and conversion, bringing as many as can be persuaded into a state of harmony and union with God, so attaining that element in the Lord's prayer which looks forward to God's Will being done upon earth as it is in heaven. But all of this is going to take a long time - the Book of Revelation echoes the ancient Jewish concept that it will require a thousand years -and it is this whole period of time which in the New Testament is called the *parousia* - the presence - of the Son of Man.

This word *parousia* is sometimes made the basis of a battle of ideologies, of variant views regarding the nature and manner, and sometimes the time relative to our present position on the stream of history, of the Advent. There is really no justification for this. Unfortunately the A.V. translators rendered *parousia*-which occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament -by “coming” in all but one instance, but in so doing they erred. They were probably swayed by the then universal view of the brevity of the Advent, one day only. In fact the word is not a verb, but a noun, and means literally the fact of being alongside, being here or present. Most modern translators render it “presence” in all its occurrences. No qualification of the word is implied; it does not indicate whether the one present is visible or not, neither does it include any idea of time or duration. It just means being present.

It is vital at this point to realize that the fact of our Lord being, or not being, visible to human beings at his Advent, or at least at the time of his arrival, has no bearing upon the reality of his presence. In the day when the Authorized Version was translated this aspect of Christian theology was very simply explained. Heaven, as believed by the scientific men of the day, was situated on the outer surface of a great “crystalline sphere” a kind of glass globe-which completely encircled the earth just outside of the sun, moon and stars, which themselves circled the earth. (This was known as the Ptolemaic cosmogony, superseded by more accurate ideas only in the late 17th century.) Christ, according to them, had only to descend through a few miles of atmosphere to the surface of the earth at his coming the second time. Today it is more easily understood that He comes to us, not from another place inside our universe, but from altogether outside it. One can by analogy picture the celestial world as existing upon a different wave-length, so that our Lord may conceivably be present upon the scene of earthly affairs without necessarily “tuning in,” as it were, to the material creation of which we and this earth are part, and so not be capable of perception by human senses, sight, hearing and so on. That was the position during most of the forty days between his resurrection and ascension; only upon occasion did He become apparent in a terrestrial body. The rest of the time He was incapable of perception by his disciples and yet still near them. If, as is indicated by Scripture, Satan, the Enemy, has been banned from Heaven since his sin and confined to earth, he also must be invisibly present in a similar manner. This fact might help to explain why the early stages of the Advent are described as being thieflike, unobtrusive, not detected by human eyes and ears, but only by the mental and spiritual faculties, rightly appraising the signs of the times. The outward manifestations, appealing to the natural senses, come later. And this leads to a

consideration of the various elements which Scripture indicates as occurring during the parousia.

There is a climactic point during the course of this period upon which all the constituent developments converge. Some end at this point, having commenced beforehand; others commence there and continue into the future. This climactic is marked by the final overthrow of the power of evil and dominion of the rulers of this world-age, and the formal establishment of the sovereignty of the Lord Christ over the earth. Since the Church, the complete body of faithful dedicated Christian believers of all generations, is to be associated with Christ in the celestial sphere for the purpose of this sovereignty (Revelation 20:4, Matthew 13:43), they must have been already resurrected and “changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) into his likeness before this point is reached. Likewise, since the earthly covenant people of God, Israel, purified and converted, is to be the Divine agent on earth for the evangelization of the world during the Millennium (Isaiah 49:6-9, 62:1-4, 66:19), their preparation and final ordeal (Ezekiel 38, 39) must also be completed before this point. On the other hand, since the power of Satan to influence men and incite to evil remains until the assumption of power by Christ but not beyond, his Millennial restraint (Revelation 20: 1) commences at this climactic. It follows therefore that those Scriptures which depict the Advent as thief-like, unknown to man, unseen, describe that part of the parousia which falls before the climactic, *ie.* during the closing years of this present age, for so long a period as the Scriptural descriptions of events can be identified as in process. During such period mankind at large is measurably or altogether in ignorance of the significance of such events or that the Advent has commenced; only the Church, the “Watchers” are conscious of the fact by means of their knowledge of the Scriptures and their spiritual discernment. Conversely, those Scriptures which depict the Advent as openly displayed, as a glorious spectacle universally seen by all men, describe that part of the parousia which falls after the climactic, *ie.* the entire duration of the Messianic or Millennial Age, a time when “they shall see the Son of Man coming in power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30), “and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5).

On this basis the events of the parousia fall into the following categories, each of which would require quite a lengthy treatise if justice was to be done to the Biblical presentation of same, but will be only briefly alluded to at this present.

The first five are events occurring or culminating prior to the end of this present Age and the inauguration of the Messianic era.

1 The destruction of the pseudo-Christian apostasy called by St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 the “Man of Sin” In his own day, he said, this apostasy was present in incipient form but could not be manifested until a “hindering power” was removed. It would then increase in power arrogating to itself the prerogatives of Christ, and would ultimately be destroyed by the “effulgence of his parousia” (presence). History has justified St. Paul's prediction by the emergence within the Church in early centuries of the thesis that the Church was to rule the world during this Age in the name of Christ. The power of paganism, the official religion of the Roman empire, precluded such development until the time of Constantine, early 4th century, when paganism was abolished and Christianity made the State religion. The “hindering one” being thus removed, there grew up, side by side with but separate from the true Christian Church, an ecclesiastical-secular system of rule which ruled Europe, and all lands into which European influence penetrated, in the name of Christ but alien from his spirit. The “Holy Roman Empire” of the Middle Ages, the Inquisition, the various combinations of Church and State which have existed, all were aspects of this system. The 19th century saw its decline and

end; from the French Revolution in 1789 to the loss by the Roman Catholic hierarchy of temporal power in 1870 the process continued, and it might fairly be said that the latter date marked its destruction (as a temporal or secular power) by the “effulgence of his presence.”

2 The progressive disintegration of the political and social order of this world, marked by the wars and revolutions, descending eventually into complete anarchy, foreseen by our Lord in Matthew 24 and elsewhere as “signs of his presence, and of the end of the Age” “Christians throughout the 19th century saw this coming; the FrancoPrussian war of 1870 precipitated the forces of change which were accelerated by the world war of 1914, the Russian revolution of 1917, and the second world war of 1939. The commercial troubles of the present only accentuate this process and justify our Lord's reference in Luke 21:25, 26 to “distress of nations with perplexity” and “men's hearts failing them for fear.” Revelation 18 affords a vivid symbolic picture of the effect upon the nations. All this, rightly understood, is characteristic of what our Lord referred to as the “days of the Son of Man,” the early days of his presence.

3 The long-desired and long-expected restoration of the nation of Israel to its own land, predicted by so many of the Hebrew prophets as associated with Divine intervention in human affairs at the end of this Age, which in New Testament language is synonymous with the Second Coming of Christ. Commencing with the Zionist Congress of 1897 when the first movements were initiated, the British conquest of Palestine in 1917 and the Balfour Declaration for the national home for the Jewish people, increasing immigration leading to the proclamation of an independent State of Israel in 1948, to the “six-day” war of 1967, the ancient predictions have been fulfilled in such manner that they could not be fulfilled again. All these events signify the presence of the Son of Man.

4 The gathering to celestial life, by means of resurrection, of the complete Christian Church, including those who are still living during this period. A prominent teaching of the New Testament is that our Lord at his Advent will first thus gather his Church to himself and afterwards be revealed with them in glory to all mankind. It follows that a space of time separates the two events. Unlike the previous three events, there can be no outward or humanly perceptible evidence of this gathering although there will be at the later revelation. It is certain though that it must be completed before the end of this Age and the commencement of the outwardly manifest phase of the Advent, and probably some little while before the end. Whether such resurrection is the work of a moment, an immediate and synonymous “rapture” of all, or the process is spread over a period of time, may be debatable in the absence of clear Scripture statements, but the fact that the other events of this initial phase are spread over about, and at least, a century or more may easily warrant the conclusion that the “change” of the Church is spread over a period. There would seem little reason for it to be otherwise, and it could thus be expected that each one on “finishing his course” is translated “in the twinkling of an eye” to join the assembly of the saints above.

5 The final onslaught of evil forces of this dying world against the converted nation of Israel, assembled in their own land, confident that God will deliver them; and that unprecedented deliverance which is at one and the same time the end of this Age with all its evil, and the manifestation, to all mankind, of Christ with his Church in heavenly power, for the world's salvation. This must come after the gathering of the Church

and it ends that period of the Advent which has been hidden and unseen from the world in general, and commences that which is apparent to all.

The implication of all this is that during this whole period the presence of our Lord has been an accomplished fact, although unrevealed to human sight.

After this climax to the age come those events which appertain to the Millennial Age and so also belong to the parousia.

6 The “binding of Satan” A vivid picture in Revelation 20 shows an immediate consequence of the assumption of earthly dominion by Christ to be the restraining of Satan’s powers of deceit and seduction “that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled.” This of itself will prove a tremendous incentive to right living and avoidance of sin on the part of mankind.

7 The resurrection of the dead. Numerous scriptures assert that the dead will return and be afforded a full and final opportunity to eschew all wrong-doing and declare themselves for loyalty and allegiance to God in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This involves a stupendous work of world evangelization which will be carried on by the Church from heaven and the Israel nation upon earth. The consequence will be that none will be lost who can possibly be persuaded to respond to the appeal of the Gospel and be saved.

8 The renovation of the earth. The promise is that the “desert shall blossom as the rose” The earth, the Godgiven home of mankind, has been polluted and devastated by man’s mishandling of its amenities and resources. One of the great works of the Millennium will be the rectifying of the damage that has been done and this will be by the labors of mankind. In all of this men will learn the meaning of the original Divine injunction to administer and have dominion over the earth, and will do so for the good of all (Genesis 1:26, 2:15).

9 Finally comes the end, when the processes of this earthly reign of Christ have done their work in reconciling to God all who prove capable of reconciliation, sin and sinners are no more, and the race of mankind is ready to enter into the eternal state. At this point Christ “delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father ... that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The purpose of the Second Advent will have been achieved. This is the end of the parousia.

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