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“WHAT IS MAN?”

“What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visiteth him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field.” (Psa. 8:4-8)

We believe that a failure to rightly understand what constitutes A PERFECT MAN, is a fruitful source of error among christians, and tends to shroud in mystery, many Scriptures otherwise easily understood.

It is the common view, but we think unsupported by a single text of Scripture, that a perfect man has never been seen on earth—in fact that all that is seen of man on earth is only the *embryo*, imperfect, undeveloped man; that to reach the perfection of his nature (*perfect manhood*) he must become a *spiritual being* like unto angels, etc. This view, we think, sadly *mixes* Scriptures, (as well as students) instead of developing harmony and beauty, by “*rightly dividing* the word of truth.”

We understand the Scriptures to teach that there have been only two *perfect men*—Adam and Jesus—Adam was created in the *image* of God: A *fleshly* image of a spiritual being; an image, in the sense that he possessed capacity for reasoning, planing, ruling, and protecting—for Benevolence, Justice, and Love, and ability to execute these, in earthly matters: characteristics which resembled his Creator. To such an extent he is an image, that God can say “Come, let us reason together.”

As Jehovah is ruler over *all* things, so, man was made a ruler over *all* (earthly) things—“In our *likeness*, let him have *dominion*”—over the beast, fowl, fish, etc. Thus as our text declares, God crowned him with

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glory and honor and placed him (in dominion) over earth. Thus David agrees with the account in Genesis, as to man’s high honors originally—with all earthly) things under his feet, or subject to him.

Genesis tells us, that God recognized the *man* whom he had made (not merely *commenced* to make, but completed) and God considered his creature "Very good." David in our text expresses the same thought when he says: "Thou hast made him a *little* lower than the angels." (Not a little *while*, as if a matter of time, but clearly and distinctly a little lower in degree.) Should we say then, that because man was a little lower, it means that he was a little *less perfect* than angels? Nay, but they were totally different kinds of beings; the one a lower degree of *spiritual being*, of which Jehovah is the highest; the other, the highest degree of animal (or earthly—fleshly) being, of which beasts, fowls, etc., are the lower degrees. Yet the highest of these earthly creatures was "a *little* lower than the angels," or lowest order of spiritual beings—Yet both were *perfect*, each according to his nature. Yes, God created man perfect and upright but he sought out many inventions through sin, by which he has woefully degenerated.

Ah yes, there is a wonderful contrast between *man* as we now see him, degraded by sin, and the perfect creature God called "very good." Sin has gradually exchanged the expression and features. Hundreds of generations of ignorance, licentiousness, and general depravity, have so changed humanity, that it is no longer an IMAGE of the Divine. The moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed and the animal propensities overgrown. He has lost physical strength to such an extent, that with all the aid of medical science, his average of life is about thirty years, whereas, at first, he survived nine hundred and thirty years under the same penalty.

Man, who was thus degraded and defiled by sin and its penalty death, working in him, is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body, and to glory, honor, and dominion, during, and by, the Millennial reign of Christ; because his ransom has been found in the person of Christ; and "as in (or by) Adam all die, even so, in (or by) Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22.) The things to be *restored* by and through Christ, are those things which were lost through Adam's sin. (Rom. 5:18,19.) Man did not lose a heavenly, but an earthly paradise. Under the death penalty, he did not lose a spiritual, but a human existence; and all that was lost is *purchased* back by his REDEEMER.

If any one be not yet satisfied that Adam was a *perfect* MAN, we can furnish *conclusive* proof that the perfect MAN is not a spiritual being, as follows:

Jesus in his pre-human existence, was, we are told, "in a form of God," *i.e.*, he was a spiritual form or being, but since to be a *ransom* for mankind, he must be a MAN, and of the same nature as the sinner whose *substitute* in death he was to become, therefore it was necessary, for him to *change his nature*; and Paul tells us that he took not, or changed not, to the *nature of angels*, but to the *nature of men*—he became a man. (Heb. 2:16.) Now notice, that this teaches not only that angelic nature is not the only one on the spiritual plane of being, but that it is a lower plane or nature than

that which Jesus was before he became a man. And Jesus was not then so *high* as he is *now*, for—Him hath God highly exalted: (Phil. 2:9), because of his becoming our RANSOM. He is now of the highest form of spiritual being—a partaker of the *divine* (Jehovah's) *nature*.

But, not only do we thus find that the *Divine*, *Angelic*, and *Human* natures are separate, distinct, and totally different; but this proves that to be a perfect MAN, is not to be an angel, any more than to be a perfect angel implies that they must become equal with Jehovah, for Jesus took not the nature of angels, but a *different* NATURE—the nature and form of men; not the *imperfect human nature* as we possess it now, degraded and marked by sin, but—A PERFECT HUMAN NATURE.

Jesus must have been a perfect man, else he could not have kept a perfect *Law*, which was the full measure of a perfect man's ability. He must have been a *perfect man*, else he could not have given a ransom for *imperfect, sinful* MEN; for since by MAN came death, by MAN also came the (*right to a*) resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15:21.)

Now we have the question fairly, in another form, viz.: If Jesus in the FLESH was a perfect MAN, does it not prove that a *perfect man* is a human and fleshly being, full of the glorious IMAGE of his Creator, and crowned with glory and honor—"a *little lower* than the angels," and not an angel, not like angels, nor in any sense a being of their order and *nature*? Paul so teaches in Heb. 2:9. [I know your questions and texts and will answer quickly.] Let me go further, and say that if Adam was a *perfect man*, any subtraction or addition (except of *knowledge*) must render the *manhood* IMPERFECT, for *perfection* cannot be made MORE *perfect*.

Again, look at the second perfect man, Jesus: Possessed of all the qualities of perfect manhood, he could not be made more perfect as a man. He possessed all those qualities of perfection (shown but slightly in his sacrificial life), which could have commanded obedience of all imperfect men.

Under promise of an after high exaltation, from the human to the divine nature; to glory, honor, and immortality, he consecrated all human (earthly) hopes, aims, interests, pleasures, and with them human NATURE, too, to death. Because it is impossible to possess two natures at the same time, the human nature was given up to death before the divine nature could be received. The human ("form of a servant") was only taken for the purpose of becoming our ransom—"that he by the grace of God, might taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9.)

He received the divine nature fully, when, having been put to death in the flesh, he was quickened, raised to life, *in* the Spirit. He received an *earnest*, or foretaste of this birth to the divine (Jehovah's) nature, when he was begotten of the Spirit. When 30 years of age, he commenced his ministry by consecration, typified in baptism, and was sealed as accepted to the

divine nature, by the Holy Spirit of promise. (John 6:27; Eph. 1:13.)

And now, he who paid our ransom, and is to bless and restore man to perfection, and then to restore the dominion of earth to him—blessed with knowledge of good and evil to such an extent that he will be able always thereafter, to choose the good; this one, now highly exalted above angels and men, and of a higher nature than either, sharing the perfection of the divine nature, is selecting a "little flock" to share with him those honors, and to partake of that same divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4.) They, as joint heirs, are, with him, to be engaged in blessing and restoring mankind to the perfection of their nature—the human, with all the *earthly glory* and dominion as at first, but with knowledge and appreciation increased.

Because the present age is devoted exclusively to the development of those who shall *change* their nature—Christ and his Bride; and because the epistles of the apostles are devoted to the description of the interests of the "little flock" and the prize for which they are now running a race, it should not be inferred that God's plans end with the completion of that choice company. Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme, and suppose that these *choice* things—divine nature, spiritual bodies, etc., are God's design for ALL *mankind*. No, to rightly divide the word of truth, we should see that the Scriptures recognize the perfection of the divine nature in the little flock, and of the human nature in the restored world, as two separate things.

The same Word of God contains earthly promises and "heavenly promises"; and it symbolically likens the earthly class to the "sands of the sea," and the heavenly class to "the stars of heaven." (Gen. 22:17.) Of the one class it is said: All the LAND which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. (Gen. 13:15.) "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them and long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isa. 65:21,22.) To the other class, who will change their *nature* from human to spiritual—divine promises are made—"EXCEEDING GREAT *and precious* promises" (2 Pet. 1:4.)—"heavenly promises." Theirs is a "heavenly calling," a calling to a heavenly or spiritual condition; it is a call to become joint heirs with Jesus, and to sit with him "in his throne." This heavenly calling is confined to the Gospel age; was never made before it, and will, as the Scriptures inform us, never be made after this age. The earthly call, was made before the high calling, and we are Scripturally told will follow after, the Gospel age. It is during the Millennial age that mankind will have the glorious opportunity of reaching human perfection, and earthly glory, honor, and dominion; their right to that restoration having been purchased by the sacrifice of the humanity of the Christ.

Now, who cannot see a distinction between these natures, and that, though both will finally reach perfection (except those who are "cast away" as unworthy), yet, because of different natures, the perfected creatures will be totally dissimilar, except that in common they will have dispositions to

do the Creator's will. We know that they will be thus alike—in harmony—one, because the perfect human was made *an image* of the perfect divine.

The ancient worthies obtained a good report (record) through faith,

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but received not the things God promised them, viz.: the land, peace, etc., "God having provided some BETTER *thing*, for us [the Gospel Church], that they [the faithful-Abraham, Samson, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, and Rahab, whose faith amounted to the hiding of the spies, etc.], without us, should not be made perfect:" (Heb. 11:40) *i.e.*, These, to whom the earthly promises are made, cannot obtain their fulfillment until the Gospel Church is finished, and receives the spiritual things promised to it; then, through it, the earthly promises will be grandly fulfilled.

Beloved, it will help you amazingly to keep clearly in view these differences of *calling* and of *nature*. It will enable you to see why, we who would attain the high, spiritual promises should not look to Samson, Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob as illustrations of—*crucifying the flesh*—or following in the footsteps of Jesus; they were running for the *earthly prize*, we for the *heavenly*. Look unto *Jesus* as the pattern and illustration of how we ought to so run as to win the spiritual prize. He was the *first* to run for the spiritual prize, the "*forerunner*," *the Leader*. Look, too, to others who ran in his footsteps, Peter, Paul, James, John, etc. These are illustrious examples, of those who *crucify* the human nature and sacrifice it, if by so doing they might attain the *new* nature offered—the prize of our high-calling.

While your steps and mine may not shine so brightly as the mentioned apostles', yet the only difference in our sacrifices and work, should be those of *ability* and *opportunity*. Our *wills* should be as thoroughly sanctified as theirs; and if so, we may feel assured that our *sacrifice* is as well pleasing and acceptable to our Father by Jesus Christ, as was theirs.

But fall not into the error of supposing that crucifying the flesh means the putting away of *sin*. No, Jehovah would never accept sins as a sacrifice. Sins should be put away, shunned, exterminated to the best of your ability; but you sacrifice, when you deny yourself personal ease, comfort, pleasures *lawful* to the natural man, but which you relinquish, to do something which you recognize as the will of God. In our crucifying, etc., we are to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Did his sacrifice consist in forsaking sins? No, in Him was no sin to forsake; but he denied himself things lawful and proper to him as a *man*, even life itself—and thus sacrificed.

To show the contrast, we will look at Paul as compared with modern preachers. Many preachers of this day, *choose* the ministry as "a profession" which is honorable, has the respect of the world,

and a comfortable and easy living, etc. Paul was called to the ministry by the *grandeur* of the "glad tidings of great joy"—he could not help preaching it, so overwhelmed was he by the "*high calling*," so anxious to obtain it for himself and to enable others to attain the same. He preached it despite the persecution, disgrace, and frown of the world—at the sacrifice of earthly opportunities, honors, ease, pleasures; and accounted it a pleasure to be permitted to preach, even though, instead of luxury, he was obliged to "labor, working with his hands" at very humble employment, and was often in hunger and poverty and danger. He was willing to endure all this, because he had a correct appreciation of the good tidings he preached, and of the prize it presented. And it is from a failure to apprehend either of these that the clergy of to-day deserve the severe

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words applied to them by the prophet: "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber: yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough—and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way [self-interest], every one for his gain from his quarter." Isa. 56:10,11. Because they hold the traditions of men, they cannot see the great prize of our calling. They have not "*good news*," but very BAD NEWS to tell—the very worst and most *awful news* that could be imagined, viz.: That the God of love, possessed of all power and all wisdom, prearranged for the eternal misery of nine-tenths of his human creatures.

Oh, when will God's children learn that their fear toward Him is taught by the precepts and traditions of men (read Isa. 29:10-14), and that his true character is Love? When will they learn that it is because "His mercy endureth forever" that he has provided for human restitution in the next age, and for the development of the little flock in the present age, through whom to communicate the coming blessings to earth.

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— March, 1882 —



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