

The Divinity

OF THE

— Lamb.

REV. V.

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LONDON, W. :
WM. H. G. BLATCHLEY,
27, LANCEFIELD STREET.

Ninepence per Dozen.

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INTERESTING indeed is the portion of the divine Word contained in the fifth chapter of the Revelation. How often is it read. As part of the vision which embraces the previous chapter, it projects the reader, as it were, into the future, presenting a scene so vividly described as to make one feel like a spectator and listener to all that goes on. This is what a prophetic vision can do. The word of revelation can foretell what is to be, recounting the attending circumstances, as well as the causes which lead up to it. We read it, then, as history ; but of the future, not of the past. A prophetic vision, however, can so place the reader in the future as to present things as if passing before his eyes. The prediction reveals what is to be ; the vision presents it as if actually and livingly in existence.

Reading, then, this fifth chapter of the Revelation, we are permitted, as side by side with the writer in spirit, to look through the door opened into the heavens, and to witness what is described as taking place therein. How varied is the teaching that may be drawn from this chapter! Are Christians and Old Testament saints to be in their very bodies in heaven? This portion leaves no doubt of that. For it is not disembodied spirits that are enthroned, but persons in their glorified bodies who sit there. Their resurrection has consequently taken place—a resurrection *from* the dead, for many will still be sleeping in the tombs when these will have sat down on their thrones on high. The scene, too, depicts them in their priestly character of interceders, with golden vials full of the prayers of saints still in trial on earth, and so symbolises them all under twenty-four elders, analagous to the twenty-four courses of the Aaronic priesthood. For they all are priests unto God.

Is the destiny of this world confided to the crucified One? Yes, indeed; for He is here seen taking the book out of the hand of Him who sits on the throne, and, therefore, with His full permission to open in due order the seals of it one by one, and thus to disclose what must take place upon earth. To Him, and to Him alone, does it appertain to do this (5).

Can the precious blood of Christ give to sinners holy boldness before the throne? Assuredly it can, and it does; for here are seen those who had sinned on earth in happy, holy boldness in the very presence of their God, and making mention of the blood of the Lamb shed on their behalf. Previously engaged in praising Him who sits on the throne (iv. 11), every voice is silenced when the angel's challenge is heard: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (v. 2). None of them forget—how could they?—what they had been on earth, or the ruin caused by the fall. Per-

fect silence pervades the whole company ; yet, when the Lamb takes the book to open it, everyone's mouth is opened, and all are free. The remembrance of that precious blood gives them boldness and freedom of spirit in the very presence of their God. Never, never shall we forget that blood. Never, never will it be a theme worn out, or too low for saints in heaven to celebrate with gladness of heart.

To another light, however, in which this chapter may be viewed, we desire to attract attention. Who is the Lamb who is the object of such attention and adoration ?* He is the One who has died, and who, though in heaven, bears the marks of His passion. "A lamb as it had been slain." Such is the description, who is the Lion, too, of the tribe of

* *Agnion*, not *agnos*, is the word here employed. *Agnos* is used of a sacrificial lamb in the lxx., and so of the Lord in the New Testament (John i. 29, 36 ; 1 Peter i. 19). *Agnion*, a diminutive appellation, is used once in the lxx. of Jeremiah (xi. 19). This term met with in the New Testament, and in the singular only in the Revelation, and there always applied to the Lord, presents Him as the One who has died, put to death by men.

Judah, and the root of David (Rev. v. 5, 6.) A Man clearly of the race of Israel, and the source of David's kingly power! Moreover, He has died. But more: He is a divine Person—God and Man in one Person. There is but One of whom this ever was true, and ever will be true. And of His divinity this chapter bears witness—abundant witness.

But such a truth, though an important article of the Christian faith, is denied by some, and its acceptance determinedly resisted. Interesting, then, and instructive it is to see in the record of this chapter what those in heaven can say about it, and in what light they regard it.

We know that when the Lord was on earth the Jews stumbled over this truth: how He, a Man, made Himself equal with God (John v. 18), and made Himself God (x. 33). It was a startling truth, we can well understand; yet Old Testament scriptures should have prepared minds to receive

it. Of Messiah's birth Isaiah had sung, and Micah the Morasthite had written. The former declared that He would be called, among other names, "The mighty God" (Isaiah ix. 6); the latter taught that His "goings forth were of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2). Rightly, then, and in the fullest sense could He be called Immanuel, *i.e.*, God with us (Isaiah vii. 14). Sojourning here on earth, with death in prospect, we learn from the quotation from Psalm cii. 24-27, that He, who would die as a man, and thus terminate His existence on earth in humiliation, was really the Creator of all things, and whose years have no end. Heb. i. 10-12 is the authority for this statement.

Further, rejected by men, crucified by them in contempt, and in hatred of God and of His Son, He sits now, where none but One who is God can sit, *viz.*, at the right hand of Jehovah, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool (Psalm cx. 1). Has

the world seen the last of Him whom they crucified? No; He is coming back, and Psalm xlv. gives a personal description of Him as returning—the King coming back in power, a Man, yet also God (6, 7).^{*} Thus on this mystery, which we cannot fathom, that union in one Person of Deity with Humanity, the Old Testament is by no means reticent.

In due time He came, fore-announced by Gabriel, and heralded by John the Baptist. As was fitting, He Himself declared and maintained this cardinal truth as to His Person. On that eventful evening with Nicodemus in Jerusalem, He uttered a clear statement about it as He spoke of Himself both as the *Son of Man* come down from heaven, and yet in heaven at the same time, and also as the *only begotten Son of God* (John iii. 13, 16, 18). There is but one only begotten Son of God, and that speaks

^{*} We are aware, of course, of the views of some as to these verses. With Heb. i 8, 9 before us, we believe the commonly received interpretation is the best.

of His eternal generation. He re-affirmed this truth as to His Person at the preliminary examination on the night before His cross (Mark xiv. 61-64), when questioned by the high priest. He again asserted it before the Sanhedrin on the morning of His crucifixion (Luke xxii. 67-70). All understood the meaning of His reference to Dan. ~~vii.~~ 13, though all His judges refused its application to the One standing at their bar. Is it true, then, that He is God as well as Man? Have we interpreted Old Testament Scripture aright in drawing that conclusion? Are His claims as to His Person to be admitted? If men on earth reject them, and His judges refused them, what will those in heaven say about them? There surely nought but what is true will be admitted.

Now on this, our chapter of the Revelation speaks with no uncertain sound. True, we have no dogmatic announcement of the doctrine in any part of it. But we have what the reader will allow us to call unde-

signed evidence in confirmation of it. Undesigned we call it on the part of the actors and speakers. Testimony of that kind is often most valuable ; and whilst in this case we would not rest the doctrine on it, we are free to call attention to it as fully supporting what we have culled from both the Old and the New Testaments.

The Lamb takes the book from Him who sits on the throne. Immediately the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are prostrate before Him (8). In the previous chapter (iv. 10), the elders are seen prostrate before Him who sits on the throne. In xix. 4, the elders and the four living creatures are together in worship before God on the throne. What conclusion is to be drawn from their attitude in chap. v. 8 ? Did not the Lamb, when on earth, tell the devil that worship was to be rendered only to God ? “ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve ” (Luko iv. 8). Yet here He receives such

adoration. Are not the living creatures the supporters of God's throne (Rev. iv. 6)? And do we not there see them absorbed in proclaiming the holiness of Him who sits as God thereon? Would the Lamb accept homage due only to God, if He is not in Himself God? Would those living creatures prostrate themselves before Him in the presence of God on His throne, if they knew that the Lamb was only a creature? Would the true God, who will not give His glory to another, allow of such homage in His presence to be rendered to one who owed his existence to His creative power? Impossible! Three impossibilities there are. *First*: That the Lamb should willingly receive such homage. *Second*: That the living creatures should render it. *Third*: That God on His throne could permit it; unless it be true, that the Lamb who died is God as well as man.

As yet, but the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders have rendered divine

homage to the Lamb. Now we read how the whole angelic host present before the throne take their part in this scene. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands open their mouths, and with one accord proclaim that the Lamb is worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12). Observe, they do not address Him as God, but speak of Him as man. What, then, are we to say of their utterance? What is its import? Rev. vii. 11-12 will show to any its significance. In the latter passage the whole angelic host are seen worshipping God, and ascribing to Him "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might." Compare their utterances. Are they speaking in the latter case to God, and in the former (v. 12) to one who is only a creature? What is there in their language to mark that? True, the terms used are not all the same in the two instances. To

the Lamb they ascribe riches—to God they ascribe thanksgiving. All else is the same. Does this difference mark the pure humanity of the Lamb, as only a man, and the true deity of Him who is on the throne? Certainly not. The ascriptions of praise are so similar, that we cannot escape from the conclusion, that in the eyes of the angels the Lamb is also divine. Angels must know who is God and who is not. If men here profess their inability to settle the question of the Lamb's claim to be God as well as man, that to the angelic host is plain beyond a shadow of a doubt. Their ascription to Him in the very presence of God shows, in a measure not to be mistaken, what they think of His person. They know that He is God.

Made lower than angels, He is yet far above them. How valuable is their testimony, for they saw Him in various circumstances when here in humiliation. They looked down on Him when a babe in the

manger ; they saw Him a hungry man in the wilderness, and ministered to Him ; they beheld Him a weary man at the well ; they knew Him as a tempted man in the garden, prostrate on the ground before His Father, and strengthened in His agony by angelic ministration. With the scene of the cross they were all, of course, perfectly familiar, and watched, doubtless, as Joseph rolled the stone to close the door of the sepulchre. If any creatures, then, might have questioned His divinity, who more naturally could have done it than the angels ? All, however, are agreed that the Lamb is worthy to receive praise such as is suited, they own, only for their God.

Another testimony is next presented. John heard every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, lifting up their voice. It was the united utterance of what we must call, in contrast to men and angels, non-intelligent creation. The action of the Lamb in taking the book

evokes from them all a response, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." God and the Lamb are thus associated, and to be so for ever and ever. Could God and a mere creature be thus associated? Could He allow it? All will see the incongruity of that. But here non-intelligent creation is united in what is said, using language only justified of the Lamb as divine.

Is creation right in what it says and does? Proof of that is immediately forthcoming. The four living creatures say, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. There the divine record stops; and how significantly? The scene thus closes with the elders worshipping together God and the Lamb. The utterance of non-intelligent creation, the living creatures, as we here see, fully endorse, and the elders admit its correctness, as they then fall before God and before the Lamb.

Four distinct attestations have we here of the Lamb's true deity : the living creatures, the elders, the angels, and non-intelligent creatures. The mind in heaven is one, and throughout creation the witness is the same. *All* the living creatures, *all* the elders, *all* the angels, and *all* created things in heaven and on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, are agreed. Who doubts it? Only men priding themselves, it may be, on their sagacity and powers of mind refuse to admit the truth confessed in heaven, and owned throughout creation, that the Lamb, who is man, is also very and eternal God.

