

MAN'S GLORY OR THE GLORY OF GOD :

WHICH IS CHRISTIANITY?

SATAN'S OBJECT.

TO exalt man has ever been Satan's aim—acquiring thus dominion, the power of death, and the glory of the world—an aim which he resolutely and unceasingly pursues, adapting his devices to the ever-varying circumstances in which man is found. Christ's declared purpose was at all cost to Himself to glorify God, and thus accomplish the one object of all His eternal purposes and counsels, and of His ways in government and grace. If therefore we are in the current of God's thoughts we shall not be ignorant of the devices of the enemy, nor of that phase of his attack peculiar to the moment.

THE MEANS USED.

The great instrument of evil to-day is false doctrine, which is always characterised, whatever the special point in question, by two things. It pretends to subserve man's glory, and thus commends itself to him. On the other hand, its real aim is to subvert God's glory—the glory of the Father and the Son. The idea of a typical humanity to be evolved and matured by the aid of Christianity and science largely obtains among the Protestant sects, and is the point of contact between them and the rationalistic and wild spiritualistic systems of the day. In the more formal and established religious bodies—national and other—the prevailing error, as pointed out by others,

is undoubtedly union with Christ in incarnation. In either case the exaltation of man is in view. My object, however, is not to speak of these, but to point out that the most recent as well as subtle form of glorying in man, instead and at the expense of glorifying in God, proceeds from a quarter whence Christians might have expected the contrary. It is therefore the more dangerous.

J. N. D.'S WRITINGS.

For the last half-century the special light and recovery of positive truth which the grace of God has granted may be said to have issued from one source—the pen of one man. That it has been bitterly opposed, especially where the interests and prejudices of systematic theology were offended, is only saying that of it which truth has ever had to encounter. But in spite of this—and Christendom has resounded with the conflict—it is certain that the works issuing from Brethren's publishers have been eagerly read far and wide; and the scriptural doctrine, immense scope of truth, spiritual insight and understanding of the mind of God, found specially in the *Collected Writings* of J. N. D., have been well-nigh universally acknowledged.

This honoured vessel and servant of the Lord is no longer with us. Ten years since he departed to be with Christ; but his reputation remains, and is still used to accredit teachings issuing from the same press, but of an entirely different character. What this character is, it is therefore of vast importance to expose, not merely for the limited circle of Brethren, but for Christians everywhere who have heretofore rejoiced in the light and truth and grace and peace ministered by his means. All should clearly understand that there has been a change in the general drift of the teaching. It is no longer God's glory which is alone in view, but man's glory. Works setting forth the truths of the heavenly calling and the return of Christ for His saints, the truth of the Church,

the body of Christ; of the righteousness of God, of deliverance from law, of the new creation and the new man, &c.; are now to be found side by side with pamphlets and brochures devoted to the glory of the creature, though indeed in a veiled, subtle, and spiritualised form, which is closely allied to the speculations of the heathen. As one has written, "The highest heathen philosophy held it impossible that the supreme God could have directly to say to a creature or to the creation. The fact of Christianity is that He Himself became a man. God is not afraid to compromise His name. He is God everywhere—nowhere more so than when He is a man, for He is perfect love."—*Dialogues on Essays and Reviews*, p. 166. Again, "The Absolute in nature becomes Relative as a Servant in place. . . . We adore Him as God; we see Him gone down under death as man, yet emptying Himself, humbling Himself, laying down His own life what belonged to, what was Divine all through."—*Notes and Comments*, part vii. p. 233.

MAN'S GLORY.

Man ever seeks his own glory, and, whatever his circumstances, keeps this steadily in view. God's purpose is to glorify Himself. The innocent man doubts and disobeys the word of God in order to exalt himself. Driven forth from the garden he builds a city, and calls it by the name of his son. Established in the renewed earth after the Flood, he seeks to build a city and a tower to make a name and organize a kingdom. Recovered from idolatry, and formed into a nation, he made gods of gold, and rejoiced in the works of his own hands. Under law, given because he was unrighteous, he went about to set up a righteousness of his own. With a knowledge of grace, he not only uses it as a cloak of licentiousness, but takes occasion by the humiliation and exaltation of Christ to make himself the subject of occupation and object of his own thoughts.

NEW DOCTRINES.*

To-day every opportunity is taken of depreciating the humiliation of the blessed Lord, stigmatizing it as His flesh and blood condition which death could touch, which did not reveal the Son of the living God any more than another man's flesh and blood did; in which eternal life was not outwardly expressed; this being in a sense apart from it, not what He was as seen on the surface, and distinct from what He was as

* EXTRACTS FROM "LECTURES ON I JOHN," BY F. E. R.—"*Death could, when God so willed it, touch His life as a man down here upon the earth, what He was after the flesh (though there was no liability to death).*" (p. 35.)

This was exactly the condition in which Adam innocent was.

"*How could death ever touch what Christ was with the Father . . . death could not touch His relationship as man with the Father.*" (p. 35.)

Thus he absolutely separates what Christ was, "as a man down here," from what He "was with the Father."

"'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which 'is in heaven,' which means, I judge, that the flesh and blood condition even in Christ had not of itself revealed it.'" (p. 71.)

Here he asserts that the Son of the living God was not revealed in the flesh and blood condition of Christ, no more than in another person.

"*Eternal life was not what was outwardly expressed in the flesh and blood condition [of Christ], for that condition was for God's will to come to an end in death.*" (p. 72.) "*It was really the person of Christ, but in a sense apart from what He took in partaking of flesh and blood, for it was what He brought into manhood.*" (p. 72.) "*It was not what the Lord was as seen on the surface, that was not the point at all, but what He was with the Father.*" (p. 73.)

This expressly contradicts I John i. 1-3, which declares that it was what the Apostles had really seen and heard and handled. But Mr. R. repeats, "*They [the Apostles] knew Christ distinct from what He was as man here after the flesh.*" (p. 73.)

Extract from letter dated Greenwich, 30th October, 1891, printed and circulated in Canada and the United States, &c.: "*Further it is perfectly certain that Scripture can and does constantly view Christ as man apart and distinct from what He is as divine.*"

That Scripture is constant in viewing Christ as mere man calls surely for utter repudiation by every Christian heart.

man after the flesh. Thus that humiliation, which was wholly for the Father's glory and for the glory of God, even, and especially, upon the cross itself, is here despised; and instead, the poor, slow-hearted disciples, who, faithful as they were, never entered into one of the Saviour's thoughts until after the cross, are accredited with a sort of second sight of what had no part in His humiliation at all—of what He was with the Father, distinct from what He was as man here after the flesh! Moreover, it is insisted that a large part of Scripture views "Christ as man apart and distinct from what He is as divine." So that in these personal perfections of the Saviour which such passages present, it is mere humanity and nothing else—the divine is eliminated. God is not glorified nor manifested, but man is; for He is there seen apart and distinct from what He is as divine. Such teaching is utterly opposed to truth.

Let us turn now for a moment to the way in which the exaltation of Christ is used to set aside the glory of God, and to substitute man's glory in place of it, occupying man with himself, and making his own glory the subject of his thoughts.*

* In his tract on "Eternal Life" the same writer says:

"The believer in the power of the Spirit realises by faith the new and heavenly being which he is in Christ for God, in which he grows from the babe to the man, and in which he will be perfected in glory according to the image of the heavenly." (p. 4.) Again he writes: "'Little children, let no one deceive you. He that doeth righteousness'—mark this—'is righteous, even as He is righteous': that is, there is in the believer a moral being which is according to Christ. . . he is righteous as I understand it in nature." (p. 41.) Again: "It is remarkable to me that the new being is expressed in one word in chapter iii. 7 (1 John). The point here is not that you are accounted righteous, it is not a divine reckoning, but it is a being." (p. 51.) Again: "The height of our righteousness is that we are righteous as Christ is righteous. We have the being which is suited to the relationship." (p. 52.) Again: "I am completely marked off from the world, because by the Spirit I am conscious of being in this new and blessed association, dwelling in God and God in me. I have power to go through the world, and to detect the form and character of evil. . . . What a great thing . . . to sit down and meditate when no eye is upon me but the eye of God—here I am, the object of the Father's perfect love." (p. 68.)

Here it is a being—a new and heavenly being which we have, by the possession of which we are righteous as Christ is, in which we realise what we are for God; so that we can sit down and meditate. “Here I am the object of the Father’s love.” It is throughout a refined and spiritualised self, so using the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that at length the creature sits down and contemplates himself with supreme satisfaction! The glory of God is obliterated by the glory of the creature.

CHRIST’S WORK AND GLORY.

How blessed to turn from these human thoughts to view the Lord Jesus Christ, whether in the days of His flesh—that pathway of perfect humiliation—or in His exaltation and displayed glory! The glory of God, the glory of the Father, is the sole engrossing object. True, He once says, in thinking of the cross, “Now is the Son of man glorified.” But how? In that God was glorified in Him. (John xiii. 31.) And if He foresees that God would glorify Him, and that straightway, it is “in Himself” He does it—the glory is God’s. The Gospel indeed sets forth the glory of Christ, but it is the glory of God shining in His face. (2 Cor. iv. 4–6.) In this way it is that the ministry of the Gospel surpasses in glory that of the law; for that Face is unveiled, and we all behold the glory of the Lord there. Moreover, are we seen associated with Him in the accomplishment of all the promises of God? It is for glory to God by us. (2 Cor. i. 20.) Surely we are of God in Christ Jesus, who is made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. But what is to be the moral result? “He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord; not in men.” (1 Cor. i. 31; iii. 21.) We make “our boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. v. 11.) How different from saying, “Here am I”! It is not a certain sort of perfection in manhood of which we have come short as sinners, but “of the glory of God.” (Rom. iii. 23.)

JEHOVAH'S GLORY.

"In His temple doth every one speak of His glory." (Psalm xxix. 9.) The heavens, unsullied by the presence of man, declare the glory of the Lord. It was the glory of the Lord that filled the tabernacle, so that no man, not even Moses, was able to enter. (Exod. xl. 35.) And when the temple was built in Solomon's day, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister. The same glory shone around the poor shepherds of Bethlehem, when the Lord of glory, Christ the Saviour, was born in David's city; and the response of the heavenly throng was, "Glory to God." Man was there, but He was God—the beloved Son in whom alone was the divine good pleasure.

GOD'S GLORY IN CHRIST'S SERVICE.

But all His ministry of grace among men was for the glory of God. The healed paralytic departed to his house glorifying God; and all were astonished, and they glorified God. If He raised the dead at Nain, expressing the tender love of God, "fear seized on all, and they glorified God." It was "the glorious greatness of God" (Luke ix. 43) that displayed itself in all His works. He loosed the bowed-down woman from her infirmity, and immediately she "glorified God" (xiii. 13), so that even all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him. He cleansed the ten lepers, and the one Samaritan "turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice." (Luke xvii. 15.) Moreover, it is to this the Saviour directs especial attention, saying, "There have not been found to return and give glory to God, save this stranger." (v. 18.) Thus also with the blind man of Jericho, he "followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God." (xviii. 43.)

THE GLORY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

From eternity to eternity, and throughout all time, the object of all the purposes, the ways, the government of God has been His glory, and that alone. The failure of the creature has been made to conduce to it; the coming of the beloved Son, God manifest in flesh, has been the full moral display of it. (John i. 14.) He sought alone the glory of the Father who sent Him—not to glorify Himself. (viii. 50-54.) "Father, glorify Thy Name," was the one thought that filled His soul in view of the terrible cross. (xii. 28.) Does He desire the glory? It is that He may glorify the Father whom He had glorified on the earth. The glory that He receives He gives to His poor disciples, not that they should be occupied with themselves, but with Him, that they might behold His glory in the immediate view of its divine source and fulness—the glory incommunicable which the creature cannot share, nor be the vessel of. May the object of our heart be ever Jesus only in the inscrutability of His person—God and man. And never may the expression of our hearts be, "Here am I," as contemplating self.

THE GLORY OF THE SAVIOUR GOD.

The persistent attempt of the enemy has ever been to substitute the glory of the creature, in whatever form, for the glory of the Creator. It is so to-day, his devices being adapted to men possessing the high and heavenly—the wonderful truths recovered in this day by the grace of God. The work of Christ, to whom Satan is definitely opposed, was ever to glorify God; and if He accomplishes it in the salvation of such as believe, chosen in Him for eternal glory before the world was, our place is to adore Him, for though true man He is our Lord and our God, and alone worthy to receive glory and honour and power. (Rev. iv. 10, 11., v. 13, 14.)

W. T. W.