

“The Virgin’s Son and Worshipping Magi.”

Proverbs xxx, 4.

Matthew i, 20-25; ii, 1-11.

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Prov. xxx. 4. Matt. i. 20-25 ; ii. 1-11.

I shall need your forbearance whilst adding a few words to what has already been brought before us, and of which I may truly say that it is the most momentous and serious subject that could possibly occupy the minds and hearts of the people of God.

It is eminently necessary that the Spirit and Word of God should hold in check at such a time the working and reasoning of the natural mind.

The great difficulty for a Jew, reasoning from that very standpoint, was, how God could have a Son, and yet the verse we have read from his own Scriptures (Prov. xxx, 4), to say nothing of many others already alluded to to-night, should have arrested his attention.

Natural generation, as we understand it, has no place in the Scriptural usage of “Only Begotten.” It expresses the infinite preciousness of the uncreated and self-existing SON, and His eternal relationship, to the Father. He subsists in virtue of what He is as a divine Being; equal with the Father and Holy Spirit. “But the Word became flesh,” and so united

in His Person, God and Man. The verse at the head of this paper (Prov. xxx, 4), asks four mighty questions:—(i.) "Who has ascended up into Heaven, or descended?"—Redemption. (ii.) "Who hath gathered the wind in His fists?"—The mysterious ways of His providence. (iii.) "Who hath bound the waters in a garment?"—His all-controlling government. (iv.) "Who hath established all the ends of the earth?"—Creation. Then comes the final query, "What is His Name, and what is His Son's Name? if thou canst tell." The "Who" and "What" must have remained eternal secrets, had not the "Only Begotten" of the Father, in order to "declare Him," veiled in flesh the glory which He had with Him before the world's foundations were laid, stooping so low that He might "tabernacle" with the sons of men and open those blessed secrets to "His Own."

"Dwells in His Bosom—knoweth all
That in that Bosom lies,
And came to earth to make it known,
That we might share His joys."

There is an inscrutable mystery connected with the Incarnation which baffles all man's reasoning powers; it is utterly beyond his reach. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father," is an absolute and unqualified statement, closing the door tightly and for ever

upon man’s curious and irreverent speculations. But where, through finite limitations, we are of necessity out of our depth, we may yet wonder, worship and adore. He, who is God and Man also, was just the very “Daysman” (Job ix, 33) we needed; for He could lay His Hand upon both. He alone was qualified for such an undertaking, for He could place His Hand at once on the Eternal Throne and on the guilty sinner. “There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. ii, 5, 6).

Without wandering too far away, permit me to turn your attention to Exodus xxviii, 15-21. In the Breastplate of the High Priest were twelve stones representing the various attributes of God. The size of the Breastplate was a span—“A span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof.” (v. 16). A man’s span could compass it in every way. Surely there was but one Man’s Hand capable of grasping such infinities. “In the days of His flesh all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him” (Col. i, 19)* and now that He is glorified, “in

* We have recently been pained and amazed to find that intelligent men, of whom very different things might have been expected, seem to imagine that our Lord in taking flesh divested Himself of His attributes! But Divine attributes are inseparable from Deity; and, manifestly, His Deity is inseparable from His own essential Being.

Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii, 9). But whether on earth, in humiliation, or in heavenly glory, He is ever the Same, and never less than "God over all, blessed for ever" (Roms. ix, 5). It may well baffle our mentality, that the most lowly, and dependent of men, should also have been "the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Is. xl, 28); but promise and prophecy, Seer and Psalmist, and all Scripture, unite in proclaiming the truth of it. At His birth it was said: "His Name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins;" and again: "Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, 'God with us'" (Matt. i, 23).

The very genealogy, which is Joseph's, shows in the light of the past how much His people needed just *such* a Saviour. To emphasize this, observe three out of the four women who are mentioned therein. A Saviour has been man's dire need ever since he became a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, educated or ignorant, respectable or debased. Every one in this Hall needs a Saviour.

What infinite sweetness is wrapped up in this, His Personal Name—"Jesus;" with it the New Testament begins and closes. "I *Jesus*

“have sent Mine Angel to testify unto you “these things in the Churches” (Rev. xxii, 16), is His final word. The next thing is Himself. “The Bright and Morning Star,” the herald of the coming day, so soon to dawn. There is little wonder, since this Son of the Virgin is “the mighty God (Is. ix, 6), that a star should leave its orbit to announce His Advent. The wise men from the east—those students of the Heavens—awakened by the sight, are impelled to turn their faces towards Immanuel’s land. We may easily believe that it was something much more than astronomical curiosity which led them to undertake such a long and arduous journey—possibly six months. Those were not the days of macadamized roads, much less of steam and electricity; but what will not the soul go through when the Spirit of God is working and Jesus is the terminus?!

Reaching Jerusalem, they find there either heartless indifference, or downright hatred, to the Object of their search. Herod sought to kill Him, and the Scribes, reading and knowing the Scriptures, were blind to all interest in the Christ of Bethlehem.

What a warning they are against knowing the letter and missing the spirit; knowing the text, but never a movement towards the Subject. Oh! the icy coldness of dead

religiousness. Let those too who are really among the living beware of a formal knowledge of the written Word, without hearts of devotion to the living Word. Oh yes! read it more and more, but keep the Blessed One in view in your perusal.

How delightful to find, amid all this rejection by Jerusalem of her rightful "King," that Gentiles from afar were gathered to do Him homage—a figure and prophecy of these nineteen Christian centuries.

No sooner are they in His presence than they fall down—"young child" though he be—to worship Him. It is not theirs to theorize about His Nativity—that has been left, with worse blasphemies, to an apostatizing ministry of these last days—but "when they had opened "their treasures they presented unto *Him* gifts: "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

This selection from their "treasures" shews an intuition far beyond their intelligence as to what was suited to the Object of their adoration; but there was another Power directing those "gifts." The "**Gold**" speaks of what is divine; it is the most precious of metals, the material too from which those representatives of Deity were made—"the Cherubims of Glory shadowing the Mercy Seat."

How apposite was such a "gift" to the

“Son of God,” little as the offerers may have entered into the truth of His glory. It was when the erst blind man of Siloam’s Pool discovered that it was the “Son of God” he saw, that it was His voice he heard, that he worshipped Him. (Jno. ix. 37, 38.) We too must *receive* sight before we can *give* Him anything.

It is an unvarying principle, in all dispensations, which David gave joyful expression to, that “of Thine own have we given Thee.” The best answer to the present-day *depreciation* of our divine Lord is a larger *appreciation* of His infinite perfections as the Son of God. It was as such that He was revealed *in* Paul, that “he might preach Him among the heathen;” and, indeed, from the very outset of his conversion he “straightway preached “Jesus (R.V.) in the synagogue that He is the “Son of God.” Whilst to the Judaized Galatians he could say, “I am crucified with Christ; “nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ “liveth in me”—he adds (and notice the change of title): “the life which I now live “in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son “of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for “me.” (Gal. ii. 20.)

It is this blessed Person, thus known in the full height of His glory, who eclipses all the

empty glitter, all the shadowy ritualism of this present age. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is 'the Son of God?'" (1 Jno. v. 5.) Gifts too for the Church, and for evangelizing, are bestowed "till we all come in the unity of 'the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.'" (Eph. iv, 13.) He is the "gold."

The "**Frankincense**" speaks of those moral traits that shone out in the obedient and dependent man, Christ Jesus, in His pathway here. The will of God was His delight; it was the "meat" the disciples knew not of. "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust" (Ps. xvi, 1) were the breathings of His heart all along the way. At the end He could say to the Father, "I have glorified Thee 'on the earth; I have finished the work which 'Thou gavest Me to do.'" (Jno. xvii, 4.)

All these hidden springs which passed under the eye of God, and of which that unique outward history was the result, had but one and only motive—the will of God. For once and for ever there was a Man on earth whose whole career from the start to the close was begun and completed in God. Thus He is "the author and finisher of faith." He presented man, in perfection, to God, as He presented God perfectly to man.

Could any one, taught of God’s Spirit, think of comparing any other—even the very best—with Him? Infidel philosophy, misnamed “theology,” may speak of “the divinity of man” to bring the fallen sinner, in some way, on to the same platform; but to the divinely-instructed, He is alone and peerless in His perfections.

As His dependence, devotedness, confidence, and unflinching faithfulness to God even to death, along with His tender sympathy, grace, mercy, and compassionate goodness to men, pass in review before our wondering eyes, this “frankincense” of sweetest odour forms further material for our adoration and praise.

“**Myrrh**” was their last tribute. It has a bitter taste but yields a sweet smell. This carries us away for the moment from Bethlehem to Calvary—though the one is necessary to the other. This it is that stands out apart from all the rest of God’s gracious ways, as His masterpiece of love. There is no second Calvary, there never can be. It is puerile, or worse, to speak of “our Golgothas,” the cross of Christ stands alone in the eternity of God, look at it from whatever side we may. It was at Calvary atonement was made. There God’s majesty, which had been outraged by sin—for “sin is lawlessness”—was vindicated,

and His holy demands met, in all their infinite requirements. Let those who seem to leave God out of their calculations, when speaking of atonement, read Psalm xxii., and hear its opening sentence, uttered by the sinless sufferer in that hour of unmitigated grief: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Oh! the bitterness of that cup to Him, no tongue will ever tell, but ten thousands times ten thousand will answer that "why" with their grateful and unceasing praises through eternal days.

It has become the fashion in certain quarters to pronounce "atonement" as "at-one-ment." The mere difference of pronouncing a word would matter but little—it is the meaning we attach to the word, or rather its meaning in Scripture, which is of the first importance. "Atonement" means "to cover," and this involves the whole question of our sin and sins being met according to the majesty and holiness of God. This the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished, and in result we are pardoned, justified, saved, have eternal life, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and are heirs of eternal glory. Ten thousand hallelujahs to His name!

But not only has "the Cross" been bitter to our divine Substitute, whilst yielding eternal

sweetness to us; it has also sent up to God a fragrance, which like the fire upon the Brazen Altar, was never to go out, and never to be put out. It is true that righteous judgment upon our guilty state and ways was borne when He was “made” sin, and “bare our sins in His own body on the tree;” yet at that very time God was glorified as never before, and in the very act of dying, another motive was supplied the Father for loving Him: “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. * * * This commandment have I received of My Father” (Jno. x, 17, 18). In that marvellous sevenfold descent, detailed in Philippians ii, 6-8, His obedience led Him from the glory throne of God on high, to the depths of Calvary’s shame and woe—“even the death of the Cross.” It is that death, called to mind by the Myrrh, with its unrelieved agony to the Holy Victim, and yet so fragrant to God and His people, that constrains the heart to pour out its worship at His pierced feet.

We must hold fast in these closing days, with a deathless grip, to the true Person of the Word “made flesh”—the Son of God—our Lord Jesus Christ—and also to the written oracles of God that reveal Him.

I heard of a young man who listened to a "modern" preacher, who seemed to take pleasure in decrying the Bible. Moses, it was said, could not write, and therefore the Pentateuch was not his. Isaiah was "the great unknown." Jonah was swallowed by no whale. Job was mythical. The Song of Solomon an Eastern love story. David did not write the Psalms, and so on. The young man, in a vein of satire, cut out these various books, one by one, as they were attacked, and on leaving the neighbourhood, called upon the preacher, offering him the rest! We must not part company with a jot or tittle of "Thus saith the Lord;" all Scripture is "God-breathed," heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word abides for eternity.

There was a warrior in ancient times, who, having lost his boat in a sea fight, swam after the vessel and grasped it with his hand. Instantly that hand was cut off. Grasping the boat with his other hand, that also was severed from his arm; but undaunted still, he swam again after the boat, and this time gripped it with his teeth. Then, according to one version, he was taken in for his bravery, others say his head was cut off; but, however that may have been, let us be like him! If needs be, "faithful unto death," may it be

ours to “hold fast” His Word, and not deny His Name, till the battle is over and the victory won; until we rest on high for ever, in company with our beloved Lord, the glorious “Leader of our Salvation;” “Who for the “joy that was set before Him, endured the “Cross, despising the shame, and is set down “at the right hand of the Throne of God!”

