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"...The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Timothy 3:15

The Tri-Unity of God

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 From *Christian Doctrines: A Compendium of Theology, 1878*

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While the Bible teaches the unity of God—that there is one and only one God—it also teaches that in the one Godhead there is a distinction of persons. The distinction is threefold. It is such as to justify the use of the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The recognition of these three persons as equally belonging to the Godhead is in theology styled the Doctrine of the Trinity.

The idea intended to be conveyed by this term is that of three in one. It is not meant that the three divine persons are three in the sense in which they are one, or that they are one in the sense in which they are three. I have seen no better definition of the term Trinity than I find in Webster's Dictionary—namely, "The union of three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in one Godhead, so that all the three are one God as to substance, but three persons as to individuality."

It must be admitted that the word person in its Trinitarian sense is not wholly free from objection, but it seems to be understood by orthodox writers that there is no better word. The objection is that it cannot be used in its common acceptation as applied to human beings. It needs modification. For example, person in the ordinary use of the term means a distinct and independent being, so that one person is one being, and a hundred persons are a hundred beings. But the Godhead there are three Persons and one Being. The dissimilarity in the two instances is manifest.

mysterious grandeur, which defies the comprehension of every finite mind, and must be received as true on the authority of the Bible. The wisest men have most readily confessed their inability to explain Trinity in Unity or Unity in Trinity. Prof. Moses Stuart well remarks, in his second letter to Dr. Channing:

"What, then, you will doubtless ask, is the specific nature of that distinction in the Godhead which the word person is meant to designate? I answer, without hesitation, that I do not know. The fact that a which affords grounds for the respective appellations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which lays the

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of

distinction exists is what we have; the specific definition of that distinction is what I shall by no means attempt to make out. By what shall I, or can I, define it? What simile drawn from created objects, which are necessarily derived and dependent, can illustrate the mode of existence in that Being who is underived, independent, unchangeable, infinite, eternal? I confess myself unable to advance a single step here in explaining what the distinction is. I receive the FACT that it exists, simply because I believe that the Scriptures reveal the FACT. And if the Scriptures do reveal the fact that there are three persons in the Godhead; that there is a distinction foundation for the application of the personal pronouns, I, Thou, He; which renders it proper to

...speak of sending and being sent; to speak of Christ as being with God, being in his bosom, and of other things of the like nature in the like way, and yet to hold that the divine nature equally belongs to each — then it is, like every fact revealed, to be received simply on the credit of divine revelation."

(*Miscellanies*, p. 23)

It has by some been made an objection to the doctrine of the Trinity that the word is not to be found in the Bible. This is true, but there is no weight in the objection if what is meant by the term is there; and this I shall attempt to show. I merely notice, without enlarging on the fact, that in the Old Testament, in several places, when God speaks the plural number is used, as in the following passages: "Let us make man in our image;" (Gen. 1:26) "Behold the man is become as one of us;" (Gen. 3:22) "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language;" (Gen. 11:7) "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa. 6:8)

These forms of expression are certainly peculiar, and there is nothing incredible in the supposition that they were used as intimations of a plurality of persons in the Godhead—a fact to be distinctly revealed in the New Testament. The teachings of Christ and his apostles are too plain to be misunderstood. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says, "Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." I shall enter into no critical examination of the import of the phrase "in the name," nor inquire whether it might be more properly rendered "into the name." It is enough for my present purpose to notice that baptism is connected with the name of every person in the Godhead.

There is no consistent interpretation of the language which does not place on equality the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If the Deity of one of these persons is recognized, there is a recognition of the Deity of the three. It is impossible to make a valid distinction as to equality and sameness of nature. The Deity of the Father will be acknowledged by all who believe there is a God. This point, then, is settled. Now, as to the Son and the Holy Spirit, who could without a shudder hear of the name of angel or archangel as substituted in place of the name of either? Why? Because of the blasphemous inconsistency of exalting creatures to an equality with God.

But the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit are joined with the name of the Father, and the conjunction is so important that the validity of baptism is inseparable from it. The doctrine of the Trinity must be true.

Some, conceding the personality of the Father and of the Son, have supposed the Holy Spirit to be an "energy" or an "influence." To show the absurdity of this view it is only necessary to point to the absurdity of baptizing in the name of an "energy" or an "influence" in connection with baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son. It is plain that the reference, in the last commission of Christ, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is a reference to persons, and not to energies or influences.

The doctrine of the Trinity is distinctly brought to view in 2 Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." These words constitute what is usually called the apostolic benediction, and they are an invocation. The love of God the Father is in yoked. This is too manifest to be denied.

Should the names Gabriel and Michael, conspicuous among angelic spirits, be put in place of the names Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit, all who reverence the Scriptures would revolt from the blasphemous substitution.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is also mentioned, as is the communion of the Holy Spirit. It transcends all belief that the grace of the Son and the communion of the Spirit are referred to in immediate connection with the love of God the Father if the three

persons are not the same in sub-stance and equal in glory. Should the names Gabriel and Michael, conspicuous among angelic spirits, be put in place of the names Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit, all who reverence the Scriptures would revolt from the blasphemous substitution. They would protest against the elevation of the highest order of creatures to an equality with God. In the benediction, however, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are invoked as well as God the Father—a fact which shows the equality of the three persons.

In Ephesians 2:18 we read, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Here the three persons of the Godhead are referred to, and the passage confirms the view already presented. In Revelation 1:4, 5 we have this remarkable language: "Grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness." As seven was the perfect number among the Jews, we are to understand by "the seven spirits" the Holy Spirit in the

plenitude of his gifts, in the completeness and diversity of his beneficent operations. If this view is correct, the point to which special attention is called is that grace and peace are sought from the Holy Spirit and from Jesus Christ, as well as from him "which was, which is, and which is to come." These, last words indicate existence from eternity to eternity, one of the attributes of Supreme Deity; and as Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are named in conjunction with him who was, is, and is to come, the irresistible inference is that they are equally divine.

The argument in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity supplied by the use of the personal pronouns, "I, Thou, He," is worthy of some expansion. The passages in the Bible are almost numberless in which God, in referring to himself, says, I, mine, and me: "As truly as I live, saith the LORD;" (Num. 14:28) "I am the LORD;" (Gen. 15:7) "All souls are mine;" (Ezek. 18:4) "Every beast of the forest is mine;" (Ps. 50:10) "Beside me there is no saviour;" (Isa. 43:11) "Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts." (Mal. 3:10)

There are passages, too, in which the Father and the Son say to each other thou, thee, and thine: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee;" (Ps. 2:7) "Thou hast loved righteousness;" (Heb. 1:9) "As thou hast given him power over all flesh;" (John 17:2) "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." (John 17:10)

While the Father and the Son address each other in the use of the personal pronouns, thou, thee, and thine, the Spirit is referred to as he and him: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John 14:26); "He shall glorify me" (16:14); "The Comforter whom I will send unto you." (15:26). It is needless to multiply proofs that the Spirit was to be sent by the Father and the Son. The Father is said to have sent the Son into the world, but neither the Son nor the Spirit is ever said to have sent the Father.

The Son is represented as becoming flesh and dying, but this is not true of the Father and the Spirit. In view of these significant facts it is obvious that there is such a threefold distinction of persons in the Godhead as to justify and to require the use of the terms Father, Son, and Spirit. Nor does this threefold distinction conflict with the unity of God, for the three persons are one in substance, while they are three in individuality. These two truths present unity in Trinity.

It may be well, before dismissing this topic, to notice that equality of nature may consist with inequality in office. The most zealous Trinitarian will admit that while the three persons of the Godhead are equal in nature and in essential glory, there is, on the part of the Son and the Holy Spirit, official inferiority. There are various scriptures in which the Father is represented as supreme in office. That is, the Son and the Spirit act in subordination to him. For this reason God is said to have sent his Son into the world, and the Son is said to have come in the flesh. Here we have inferiority, in the sense that he who is sent is inferior to him who sends.

The Son is also recognized as the servant of the Father, for it is said, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen." (Matt. 12:18) As the servant is subordinate to the master, so was the Son subordinate to the Father. Christ said again and again, "I came to do the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38) As doing the will of another denotes inferiority, so Christ in doing the will of the Father appears as his inferior. But the inferiority is in office, not in nature; the subordination is official, and does not touch the divine substance. Here there is perfect, undisturbed equality.

In contemplating the doctrine of the Trinity as an unspeakable mystery, we must ever guard against looking on it as a profitless speculation, without practical influence.

What I have said of the second person of the Godhead may be said substantially of the third. When God the Father says, "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh," (Acts 2:17) when he is said to "give

the Holy Spirit," (Luke 11:13) and when Jesus says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you," (John 15:26) there is manifest reference to inequality of office. There is the sublimest equality of nature.

Official inferiority and natural equality may be easily illustrated. The President of the United States is officially superior to any and every man in the nation. All the men who hold office are, so far as official position is concerned, inferior to him. No one aspires to be his equal. But in nature every citizen of the republic is his equal—that is, every citizen possesses the same human nature. Equality in nature and inferiority in office are therefore exemplified in matters both human and divine.

In contemplating the doctrine of the Trinity as an unspeakable mystery, we must ever guard against looking on it as a profitless speculation, without practical influence. The very fact that the subject is so far above our comprehension should inspire us with reverential modesty and humility. The highest flights of reason cannot reach it, yet the doctrine is among "the true sayings of God." (Rev.

19:9) Alas, how little we know about how God is infinite—for we are finite, and can know but little of him and the mode of his existence.

Where we cannot understand, let us wonder and adore. The economy of redemption seems to have been arranged in recognition of a distinction of persons in the Godhead, and hence the three persons are represented as acting their respective parts in the great work. It is our privilege to consider the love which had been lodged in the Father's bosom from eternity as expressing itself in the gift of his Son; to contemplate the Son as pouring forth his soul unto death, thus procuring redemption by his blood; and to rejoice in the work of the Spirit in renewing the heart, sanctifying the soul, and fitting it for heaven.

We should never forget that in baptism there is avowed consecration to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as it is recognized in baptism, has much to do with experimental and practical piety. Far, far from us be the idea that the existence of three persons in the Godhead is a barren speculation. It is a truth both mysterious and grand, and its influence should be eminently salutary.

One of its effects should be the stimulation of desire on the part of Christians to be one even as the three persons of the Godhead are one. Who can think of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one—one in nature, one in love, one in purpose—and not hope for the day when the intercessory prayer of Christ will be answered in the union of all his followers?



The History of Preaching

J. A. Ireland

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About the time men first began to meet for the public worship of the Divine Being, preaching commenced in the world.

Enoch, son of Jared, was a preacher, and lived cotemporary with Adam more than three hundred years. We talk about "thorough training!" What must have been the opportunity of Enoch for learning the destiny of man, when he could learn from the lips of the first man the story of the creation, the circumstances of the fall, the terms of the promise, with other great truths connected with man's redemption I Hear him (Jude 14, 15): "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Enoch never preached by the clock, neither did he read his sermons, and yet it is said (Heb. 11: 5) "that he pleased God." From Enoch to Moses, each patriarch worshiped God with his family, and at certain times, such as new moons, &c., a number of families worshiped together. They were instructed by different preachers, alternately speaking to the people. They had no splendidly decorated church

edifices, but met underneath some gigantic forest tree, or they were protected from the weather by tents constructed for the purpose.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Jacob, when his house lapsed into idolatry, preached against it, and exhorted them, and all that were with him, to put away strange Gods, and go up with him to Bethel.

Moses was a preacher, raised up by the authority of God. He felt the responsibility of delivering his message to the people; hence his earnest appeals in favor of his God.

Joshua preached with great effect to the tribes of Shechem. (Deut. 34:9) It seems that public preaching was not necessarily attached to the priesthood. Joshua was an Ephraimite, and not a Levite. Solomon was a prince of the house of Judah, and Amos a herdsman of Tekoa; yet both were preachers.

When the Jews were carried to Babylon, the prophets still preached to them. When the years of captivity expired, Zerubbabel, Haggai, and others, continued preaching to the people. They wept, fasted, prayed, preached, &c., and at last prevailed.

Nehemiah and Ezra performed a noble part among their brethren. The first was Governor, and reformed their civil state. The latter was a scribe of the law, and addressed himself to ecclesiastical affairs, in which he rendered the noblest service to his country and all posterity. Ezra restored, arranged, and published the Holy Scriptures after the Jews' return from captivity. He corrected many errors which had crept into the old manuscripts by the carelessness of transcribers. The Jews have an extraordinary esteem for Ezra, and say, that if the law had not been given by Moses, Ezra deserved to have been the legislator of the Hebrews.

Ezra revived and new-modeled public preaching. During the seventy years' captivity, the Jews had almost lost the knowledge of Hebrew, and spoke a jargon, made up of their own and the Chaldean language, which was mostly used in Babylon. Hence it became necessary that he should explain words as well as ideas to the people. This gave a new cast to the art of preaching. Houses were now opened, not for ceremonial worship, as sacrificing, for this was confined to the temple; but for public prayer and praise, reading the law, preaching, &c. These houses were called Synagogues. The people came together thither morning and evening for prayer.

At Jerusalem there was a large street near the water gate, on which Ezra met the people on a Sabbath morning for the purpose of reading and expounding the law to them. Imagine that you see that good old man ascending a pulpit, constructed of wood, in fashion of a small tower; see seated at his side thirteen others of the principal preachers of his day. The whole affair looks very much like what I have seen at some of our country churches, -where stiff aristocratic notions of propriety do not forbid the inviting our preaching brethren into the pulpit. Ezra produces the law—commences unrolling it. The people see it, and rise to their feet. Ezra blesses the Lord—the people respond, Amen, Amen. The preaching commences; the whole congregation is in tears. Think!—fifty thousand people standing in the open air, on a public street, weeping at the reading and expounding of the law. The famous Plato was then living, and teaching dull philosophy. But what was he, and what Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or any of those pagan orators, in comparison with Ezra?

From this period to the appearing of the Saviour, public preaching was practiced, and Synagogues were multiplied in great numbers. Yet it seems that the people grew more

and more perverse in their wills, and wandered to a great distance from God.

As one light after another under the old dispensation was extinguished, the world became enveloped in moral darkness, until at last, when the fullness of time had come and as the darkest hour of the night is just before day—it seemed that all was lost in darkness. But stop! The prophets had foretold a Saviour to come. Twilight makes its appearance. John Baptist is preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

After a brief period the glorious Sun of Righteousness bursts forth with all his resplendent glories, and illumines our world. Angels reach forth and pluck their harps from the willows, and strike up the song of redeeming love. Earth and heaven are in commotion. The Son of God is made flesh, and dwells among us.

Jesus Christ was the prince of preachers. No one can but admire his style, the transcendent beauty of his images, the alternate softness and severity of his language, the wise

The Saviour excelled all other preachers; and yet how plain was his language, how sublime his conceptions of heavenly truths, how well adapted was all his preaching to poor, fallen humanity.

choice of his subjects, the loveliness and gracefulness of his deportment, and the indefatigableness of his most earnest zeal. The Saviour excelled all other preachers; and yet how plain was his language, how sublime his conceptions of heavenly truths, how well adapted

was all his preaching to poor, fallen humanity. His sermon upon the Mount is full of instruction. His prayer — how beautiful yet how sublime. His parables are inimitable, yet they bear to the human mind great truths, full of the most dignified wisdom, calculated to prepare mortal man for his final destiny. Christ's prayer, while he was on the Cross, contains more sound religious instruction than whole volumes of theology prepared by men. The Saviour stands preeminently the greatest preacher the world ever saw. And how strictly all other preachers should aim to follow the blessed Saviour's example.

The apostles imitated their Divine Master, constituted multitudes of churches, and were wonderfully successful in all their arduous labors. They did not engage in the arena of political strife, but were contented while engaged in preaching Christ to the people. They did not employ the bombastic eloquence of school theology. No, they had no use for it. They preached after the pattern Christ had given them, administering those holy truths burning and glowing with the impress of Deity stamped upon them, without being soiled and polluted by being cast and remodeled in a

theological seminary. Look at Peter, with uplifted hands dripping with water from his fishing net, crying to his fellow-men to repent and obey the Saviour.

What multitudes were moved to repentance and faith through his instrumentality. Peter was not a graduate of any theological school. We have no reason to suppose any of the apostles were dubbed D.D., L.L. D., or Reverend, but on the other hand, we have scripture proof that they were plain men. Even Paul, though a well-educated man, was the plainest of preachers. Chrysostom tells us he was but three cubits high, yet Paul was high enough to reach heaven. His conversation was there, and thence he derived those pure lessons of religion and morals, and that loftiness of Christian principle, for which he was so much distinguished. The other apostles performed their work, and, like Peter and Paul, were gathered to their fathers, being hurried from the stage of action by suffering and martyrdom. After the apostles died, everything came to pass as they had foretold. The whole Christian system underwent a change. Preaching shared the dreadful fate of other institutions, and this glory of the primitive churches was now, to a certain extent, degenerated.

We must now "wade through a continent of mud" to find the history of preaching as recorded by the Christian fathers, as they are called. Christianity is found in the writings of those men, but it is so mixed with pagan philosophy and Jewish allegory, that it is difficult to separate the gold from the dross. This continued for about three centuries. The next five centuries produced many pious and excellent preachers belonging to the Latin and Greek Churches, but the doctrine they preached continued to degenerate.

Belonging to the Greek Church, we will mention Basil, bishop of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, who preached at Antioch, and Gregory Nazianzen, all of whom flourished in the fourth century. About the same time Jerome and Augustine flourished in the Latin Church. For some time, preaching was practiced alike by Bishops, Elders, Deacons, and sometimes by lay brethren. But this did not long continue. After a while, preaching was confined to Bishops alone, and such as they saw cause to appoint. This appointment they called ordination. So many errors had crept into the church at this time, but little of gospel simplicity was to be found in the Christian Church, so called. A traveling Bishop claimed no right to preach unless he was invited by the churches where he visited. The style of preaching in those days differed very much. All preachers spoke extempore. Sermons were preached in

what was called the vulgar tongue. Greeks preached in Greek; Latins preached in Latin. Preachers in those days did not preach against time, but one hour was the usual length of a sermon. It was usual for preacher and people to stand while worshipping, but occasionally very aged persons sat. Many of the fathers were fond of allegory, and took pattern after Origen, the everlasting allegorizer.

Degenerate as those days were in comparison with the days of the apostles, they were far better, in many respects, than the ages which follow — when metaphysical reasonings, and mystified mystical divinity, and Aristotelian categories, connected with the reading of the lives of saints, were in place of gospel sermons. It is enough to make a Christian heart bleed, and his eyes flow with tears of blood, to read the history of the apostate church from this time until the dawn of the reformation, when a new and glorious change took place. The people, as well as the clergy, began to read the Bible and interpret it for themselves. Preaching became more common, and pulpits, which had been "bells without clappers," according to Latimer, were occupied by preachers.

Men talk about a reformed Christianity. Christianity proper never needed, and never will need, reformation. Christianity is pure and holy.

But it were well to remark, that while we trace the outlines of the history of preaching among a people where the gospel in its adulterated form was preached, there were still men who strictly adhered to the primitive simplicity of the gospel, and preached it in its

matchless purity to obscure and vilely persecuted churches, who had to flee to the rocks and mountains to evade the bloodthirsty vengeance of an apostate church. History abundantly proves that during the reign of persecution and miserable apostasy and adulterated Christianity in the established churches, there still remained a people who worshiped God after the apostolic model. Consequently, a pure church, though frequently an obscure one, has always existed in the world ever since the days of the apostles.

Men talk about a reformed Christianity. Christianity proper never needed, and never will need, reformation. Christianity is pure and holy—always remains the same, in all countries, at all times, and under all circumstances. But the half-fabricated complications of polluted compound mixtures of countless adulterations of Christianity, so called, did need reformation, and still needs it; or, rather, a complete transformation, which is alone to be accomplished by the omnipotent power of Almighty God, through the instrumentality of his faithful servants and true ministers of the Cross.

How unlike the ministerial work of the present day, when churches must have a splendid edifice, a fine organ and a choir of singers, hired seats, with all that sort of thing—so unlike anything found in the New Testament. But there were men in those days who served God from principle, and were willing to serve him under any circumstances. Cramner reprov'd proud Henry VIII in such a manner as no other man dared to do. All of these men had not what is called a "thorough training," yet they exerted a mighty power for God. Bishop Wilkins enumerated upwards of sixty who had written on the subject of preaching, and gave rules of instruction in the art of preaching.

Within the last two centuries we have had burning and shining lights in the pulpits of Europe and America—men who have faced all opposition that fiendish malice and hellish influence could exert to hinder the cause of Christ—while there have been men of eloquence, and piety, and great moral worth in other denominations. The Baptists

have been honored with names of equal, if not far superior greatness. Look at the immortal Bunyan, who was confined in Bedford jail nearly thirteen years. Was he idle? No. He wrote that inimitable allegory, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is now exerting such a vast influence over the Christian world. He preached through iron grates to the ruined sons and daughters of Adam. Andrew Fuller, John Foster, Robert Hall, and many others of England, were bright and shining lights.

Those who have read the history of our American brethren, especially the history of Virginia Baptists, remember how they preached and toiled for the cause of God. James Ireland, of Virginia, was an example. He preached through grated windows to perishing sinners.

Here I must leave my readers for the present.



Lectio Divina

Lighthouse Trails

As appearing on www.soundthetrumpet.ca, August, 2015

There's a lot of talk about it today; umpteen books are published and more are on the way about lectio divina; and an increasing number of evangelical/Protestant figures are writing about it, endorsing it, and teaching it. Some people think lectio divina simply means to read a passage of Scripture slowly (or "praying the Scriptures") then ponder or think on that Scripture. That can be a part of it.

But if you ask mystics or contemplatives what it really entails (And who would know better than they?), they will tell you that lectio divina (pronounced lex-ee-o di-veen-a) always includes taking a passage of Scripture (or other writings), reading it slowly, and repeating it as you work your way down to where you have just a word or small phrase from the passage that you are "meditating" on (repeating over and over). Basically, you are coming up with a mantra-like word or phrase that has been extracted from a passage of Scripture, which, according to contemplatives, if repeated for several minutes, will help you get rid of thoughts and distractions, so then, they say, you can hear the voice of God and feel His presence (going into the silence).

There are said to be four steps in lectio divina. These four steps are:

Reading (lectio)—Slowly begin reading a biblical passage as if it were a long awaited love letter addressed to you. Approach it reverentially and expectantly, in a way that savors each word and phrase. Read the passage until you hear a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts, or even disturbs you.

Reflecting (meditatio)—Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Let it sink in slowly and deeply until you are resting in it. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.

Expressing (oratio)—If you are a praying person, when you are ready, openly and honestly express to God the prayers that arise spontaneously within you from your experience of this word or phrase. These may be prayers of thanksgiving, petition, intercession, lament, or praise. If prayer is not part of your journey you could write down the thoughts that have come your way.

Resting (contemplatio)—Allow yourself to simply rest silently for a time in the stillness of your heart remaining open to the quiet fullness of God’s love and peace. This is like the silence of communion between the mother holding her sleeping infant child or between lovers whose communication with each other passes beyond words.

Catholic priest and contemplative mysticism pioneer Thomas Keating explains what lectio divina is not in an article he has written titled, “The Classical Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina.” He explains that lectio divina is not traditional Bible study, not reading the Scriptures for understanding and edification, and not praying the Scriptures (though praying the Scriptures can be a form of lectio divina when a word or phrase is taken from the Scriptures to focus on for the purpose of going into “God’s presence”) Keating says that lectio divina is an introduction into the more intense practices—contemplative prayer and centering prayer.

While some people think lectio divina is just reading Scripture slowly (and what’s wrong with that), it is the focusing on and repeating a word or small phrase to facilitate going into the “silence” that is the real danger. There is certainly nothing wrong with reading Scripture carefully and thoughtfully. Thoughtfully, we say. In eastern-style meditation (and in contemplative prayer) thoughts are the enemy. Eastern-style mystic Anthony De Mello describes this problem with thoughts in his book, *Sadhana: A Way to God*:

“To silence the mind is an extremely difficult task. How hard it is to keep the mind from thinking, thinking, thinking, forever thinking, forever producing thoughts in a never ending stream. Our Hindu masters in India have a saying: one thorn is removed by another. By this they mean that you will be wise to use one thought to rid yourself of all the other thoughts that crowd into your mind. One thought, one image, one phrase or sentence or word that your mind can be made to fasten on.”

Spiritual director Jan Johnson in her book, *When the Soul Listens: Finding Rest and Direction in Contemplative Prayer* also believes that thoughts get in the way, and the mind must be stilled:

“Contemplative prayer, in its simplest form, is a prayer in which you still your thoughts and emotions

and focus on God Himself. This puts you in a better state to be aware of God’s presence, and it makes you better able to hear God’s voice, correcting, guiding, and directing you.”

Mark Yaconelli, author of *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*, has this to say about lectio divina. Keep in mind that Yaconelli’s materials are used in evangelical/Protestant settings (e.g., colleges, seminaries, youth groups):

“In order to practice lectio divina, select a time and place that is peaceful and in which you may be alert and prayer fully attentive. Dispose yourself for prayer in whatever way is natural for you. This may be a spoken prayer to God to open you more fully to the Spirit, a gentle relaxation process that focuses on breathing, singing or chanting, or simply a few minutes of silence to empty yourself of thoughts, images, and emotions.”

Research analyst Ray Yungen explains this silence that contemplative mystics seek:

I once related Foster’s breath prayer method to a former New Age devotee who is now a Christian. She affirmed this connection when she remarked with astonishment, “That’s what I did when I was into ashtanga yoga!”

“When [Richard] Foster speaks of the silence, he does not mean external silence. In his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, Foster recommends the practice of breath prayer—picking a single word or short

phrase and repeating it in conjunction with the breath. This is classic contemplative mysticism...*In Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, [Foster] ties in a quote by one mystic who advised, ‘You must bind the mind with one thought’...I once related Foster’s breath prayer method to a former New Age devotee who is now a Christian. She affirmed this connection when she remarked with astonishment, ‘That’s what I did when I was into ashtanga yoga!’”

With lectio divina, the word or phrase one repeats eventually can lose its meaning, and this repetitive sound can start to put the practitioner into an altered mind state. Yungen tells us that:

“Keeping the mind riveted on only one thought is unnatural and adverse to true reflection and prayer. Simple logic tells us the repeating of words has no rational value. For instance, if someone called you on the phone and just said your name or one phrase over and over, would that be something you found edifying? Of course not; you would hang up on him or

her. Why would God feel otherwise? And if God's presence is lacking, what is this presence that appears as light during meditation and infuses a counterfeit sense of divinity within?"

Yungen exhorts believers that: "the goal of prayer should not be to bind the mind with a word or phrase in order to induce a mystical trance but rather to use the mind to glory in the grace of God. This was the apostle Paul's counsel to the various churches: 'Study to shew thyself approved' (2 Tim. 2:15) and 'we pray always' (2 Thessalonians 1:11) as in talking to God with both heart and mind."

In order to help those you care about stay clear of contemplative spirituality and spiritual deception, it is important for you to understand how lectio divina plays a significant role in leading people toward full blown meditative practices. And we propose that this "presence" that is reached during the "silent" altered states of consciousness from saying a word or phrase over and over (or focusing on the breath or an object) is not God's presence. God has instructed us in the Bible not to perform "special kinds of process[es]" or "formula[s]," as Thomas Keating calls lectio divina, to induce mystical experiences

(see Deuteronomy 18:9-11); thus, we believe ample warning about lectio divina is warranted.

In conclusion, lectio divina is a bridge to eastern-style meditation. If indeed, this is true, then it will lead Christians away from the message of the Cross and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and thus Christians should not practice lectio divina. Do you know where practices such as lectio divina took Thomas Keating in his spirituality? When you read the statement by him below, you can see the answer to this:

"We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the age-old wisdom of the East and 'capture' it for Christ. Indeed, those of us who are in ministry should make the necessary effort to acquaint ourselves with as many of these Eastern techniques as possible.

"Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM and similar practices, especially where they have been initiated by reliable teachers and have a solidly developed Christian faith to find inner form and meaning to the resulting experiences."



The Frailty of Human Life

J. R. Scott

From *The Baptist Preacher*, February 1846

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10)

(A sermon, preached in Hampton, Va., Nov. 2, 1845, at the funeral of Miss Courtney Brough, who died Oct. 31, at the venerable age of 104 years and six months.)

It is an extraordinary occasion, my friends, that has called us together at this time—an occasion, which, in itself, is more instructive than any sermon it can call forth. Such an event as this is of exceedingly rare occurrence, and one which seems almost to stamp an air of falsehood on our very text. Those inspired words declare the limit of human life to be seventy years, with a bare possibility, in cases of uncommon vigor of constitution, that eighty may be reached. But we are now attending the funeral solemnities of one who was spared through the

revolution of more than a century, and thus by more than twenty years exceeded the outer limit assigned by the sacred writer.

There is no necessity, I presume, for any labored attempt on my part, to reconcile this seeming discrepancy between God in his providence and God in his Word. The Psalmist was not ignorant of the fact that instances do occur of persons surviving the period of fourscore years; nor did the spirit of inspiration conceive of so futile a design as to delude men into an error in respect to the possible duration of human life. The text is descriptive of man's frailty; and what the Psalmist would be understood to say, is, that he who presumes on living beyond eighty years,

presumes where the odds are all against him—where he has no ground for his expectation—where the common course of nature turns all the reasons in opposition to his presumption.

So few are the cases in which persons live to a greater age than fourscore, that to speak of any age beyond, and especially of a century, would render a picture of human frailty untrue to the reality. To introduce into the description so rare an occurrence, would be doing like the artist, who, in painting a landscape, should distinctly bring out those minute and distant objects which truth to nature requires be left out of the canvas. And yet, my friends, it is one of these very occurrences, so exceedingly rare, that has brought us together this morning. We are witnesses of a scene, which many pass long lives without witnessing—the funeral of one who has survived a hundred years.

Our departed friend was indeed spared to a great age—one hundred, four and a half years! In that time, how many, and how great events have transpired! No less than five monarchs have sat upon the throne of England, one of them for sixty years; and our own great nation has come into existence! At the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte, the deceased was within a few months as old as your speaker. In her lifetime, how many thousands have fallen on a thousand battle fields! But, what is delightful to contemplate, is how many great movements have been set on foot, and successfully carried out, to liberate, to elevate, and to save mankind!

Probably few, if any, in this congregation, have ever before been present on such an occasion. And what should be the effect on us? Should it be to diminish our sense of the shortness of life, seeing that the days of the deceased were so lengthened out? Should it be to increase our feeling of security, and to flatter us so with the notion that our lives may be long protracted, as to embolden us in putting off attention to the insuring of our souls' salvation? If such, dear hearers, is the use to which we put this occasion, we most grossly pervert it. I conceive that this event, instead of weakening the force of those lessons so impressively taught us by our text, ought only to augment the force with which they should come home to our minds; and I pray God that what is so out of the common course in this dispensation of his providence, may only serve to imprint the more deeply in our minds both the ordinary lessons of mortality, and those particular lessons which are suggested by our text.

Let me then proceed at once to direct your attention to the instruction of this passage. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow : for they are soon cut off, and we fly away."

I. From these words we learn, in the first place, that human life, however lengthened out, MUST come to an end. Our lives as compared with the lives of others may be long, but impartial death will come to us at length. Mortality is our common lot. There is no discharge in this war. "His days," says Job, "are determined; the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." (Job 14:5) The days of our years may be threescore years and ten; they may reach even to fourscore; nay, they may, as in the case of our departed friend, be increased even very considerably beyond that; but the shaft of the insatiate archer cannot be escaped; sooner or later, it will pierce us, and we must fall.

But he is only the messenger of another. It is God who issues the decree. It is the author of life who is the arbiter of life's close. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest Return, ye children of men." (Ps. 90:3) It is the same Being

It is because we are a corrupt and sinful race, that we are a dying race.

in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind, who taketh away their breath, so that they die, and return to the dust. And why is it that

death is thus inevitable? The reason is suggested in the connection of our text. Says the Psalmist, "we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." (Ps. 90:7, 8)

When we consider the goodness and the power of God in connection with the fact of our mortality, we cannot but feel that in some way our race has been subjected to his displeasure, and that this is the cause of our mortality. Such we find to be the case. It is because we are a corrupt and sinful race, that we are a dying race. We inherit depravity, and this has infused the poison into our veins which must issue in our dissolution.

The sentence pronounced originally on our general father in Eden, was pronounced on him as the representative of his race—"dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3:19) That sentence continues in full force against all his posterity. "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." (Rom. 5:12) It was part of the direful penalty of Adam's transgression, and probably no little aggravation of his own personal punishment, that

he should transmit to the remotest generation of his descendants, a sinful, diseased and mortal constitution; that he should not merely die himself, but that all who should trace their origin to him should die.

My hearers, it is not for us to arraign our Maker, and question the equity of this arrangement. That the principle holds, not only in our relation to Adam, but in all the relations of life, is beyond dispute. It is one of the great principles of God's moral government. Our Sovereign has so ordered it that no one of us can sin, without others being more or less affected by the consequences. The child must feel the effects of his father's vicious excesses. He feels them in the diseased and debilitated body he has derived from his parent. The spendthrift head of a family not only brings penury and sorrow upon himself, but also reduces all who are dependent on him to want and woe by his prodigality. And so throughout society.

We may presume to question the justice of this arrangement as much as we please, but we cannot deny that it exists. God has so constituted us, and has so constituted society, that it must be so—it cannot be otherwise. But is there nothing to counterbalance this gloomy and mysterious part of his plan? It is true that we suffer from sins and vices not our own. Is it not equally true, that we derive benefits from good deeds and virtues not our own? Does the child profit nothing from the excellencies of the parent? How many owe their fortune, and good name, and standing in society far more to others with whom they are, or have been connected, than to themselves.

The jealous God who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, delights also to show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments. What claim have these latter to the blessings which fall to them? And what claim, we demand, has the child, on the score of equity, to be freed from the inconveniences entailed on him by his father's vices, which does not prove also that he has no right to derive advantages from his father's virtues? Men do not complain of this arrangement so far as it affects them favorably; but when it involves them in misery, they hesitate not to murmur, and accuse their righteous Sovereign of injustice; and this notwithstanding the plan is so admirably adapted at once to restrain men from wickedness, and excite them to the highest moral excellence.

And has God revealed nothing in his plan, as an offset to the unhappiness of our condition in consequence of our relation to Adam? Yes, dear hearers, there is not only a first Adam, in whom we fell, but there is also a second Adam, in whom we may be restored. A glorious provision has been made for our redemption. As in Adam we have death, so in Jesus Christ we may have life, and life eternal. The original sentence must indeed be inflicted on our bodies; but if we believe in Jesus, the day is coming when both soul and body shall be gloriously wrested from the hand of the destroyer. Hear the voice of death's conqueror: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26)

Hear an apostle: "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, 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 of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom 5:17-19)

The jealous God who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, delights also to show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments.

Here, my friends, you see the offset to the unhappy consequences of Adam's fall, which accrue to us. So far as original sin is concerned, the second Adam has doubtless

cancelled the guilt of that, and removed from us its retribution in eternity. And so far as our own actual personal sins are concerned, he stands ready to take those upon himself, and secure our perfect justification, if we will but believe in him, and thus accept the proffer of his grace. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Rom. 8:1)

Having by faith laid hold of this precious provision, we may triumphantly exclaim, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:33, 34) By this arrangement, we are placed under conditions even more favorable for securing eternal life, than those under which Adam was originally placed in Eden. So, should we persist in neglecting so great salvation, just indeed will Jehovah be seen to be, not merely in rendering it impossible for us to escape the natural death, which is the lot of all, but that

second death also which he has denounced against all obstinate unbelievers.

I have thus stated, as fully and clearly as my limits allow, the facts and principles pertaining to the first lesson of our text—that our lives, however lengthened out, must come to an end. Much more might be said, but I am compelled to pass on.

II. The text teaches us, in the second place, that human life, at longest, is very short. When the Psalmist speaks of threescore years and ten, and fourscore, he speaks of this advanced age very differently from most men. We do not hear him exclaiming, how astonishingly long do some people live! To what a wonderful extent the lives of many are drawn out! No, no, he does not say this. He would bring up vividly before our minds how frail and transitory is that earthly sojourn which can be protracted no longer. "It is soon cut off, and we fly away." What a span is that existence whose longest duration is embraced within such narrow limits. The simple reading of the text is enough to show that this is the idea intended.

But it is necessary for us to observe the connection in which this passage stands, in order to understand clearly the light in which the brevity of man's life was presented to the mind of the inspired penman. It was in contemplating the eternity of God's existence, that man's appeared to him so short. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." (Ps. 90:2) He was thinking of God as "the high and holy One, who inhabiteth eternity," (Isa. 57:15) whose "name is from everlasting," (Isa. 63:16) whose "years are throughout all generations," (Ps. 102:24) in whose sight "a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." (Ps. 90:4)

Ah! He cries, what a contrast between the existence of the infinite Jehovah, and that of the worm upon his footstool! It is thought little short of a miracle that a man should still be able to totter about under the burden of fourscore years—but what a nothing is this, when brought into comparison with the eternity of Him who has "been our dwelling place in all generations."

This, my hearers, is the most impressive view that can possibly be taken of the shortness of human life ; and when, in this light, the question is asked, " What is your life? " what other answer can be given save that which inspiration has itself returned—" it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." In

this view, even the age of Methuselah, nine hundred sixty and nine years, appears short. How much more the space within which the longest life at the present day is contracted. In how many ways might we compare our stay on earth, and it would seem short.

Man's days are few when compared with the duration of his own works even. There is hardly anything he makes which does not outlive him. But what are finite things in comparison with the infinite? They can all be traced back to a beginning; and as far as this world is concerned, we can set a time in futurity, and say they shall then be known no more. How different is it with God.

The mind may stretch back into the dim past, before the first stone of the pyramids was laid; it may reach back to a time when the names of Rome, and Greece, and Egypt, and Assyria, had never been uttered ; nay, to that time when the earth itself "was without form and void;" (Gen. 1:2) but an eternity still stretches out back of all this, and the mind staggers and halts in its attempt to reach a period when God was not; and glancing forward, it finds him still, "the living God, and stedfast for ever." (Dan. 6:26) It was this contrast that impressed the mind of the Psalmist so powerfully with a sense of the shortness and frailty of human life.

With our stay on earth being at longest so brief, what, my dear hearers, is the inevitable inference? Is it not that our Maker created us for something more than earth? Is it not, that whatsoever our hand findeth to do in the accomplishment of life's great end, we should do it with all our might? How often have you been told that you were sent into this world to prepare for another?

Short as life is, it is long enough for its design. If perverted—if not put to that use which God requires, a short life is too long; for every added day is only augmenting the fearful weight of that wrath which we are treasuring up against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Already, sinner, art thou involved in guilt and condemnation. The thunders of Sinai are out against you, and except you repent, you must certainly perish. I point you to Calvary! "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) There, there is your only refuge; hasten for your life! To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. 3:15) As "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:20)

III There is one lesson more suggested by the text. I accordingly remark, we are taught in the third place, that what is added to the ordinary duration of human life, is after all, what is little to be desired. If, by reason of strength, our years be fourscore, "yet," says the Psalmist, "is their strength labor and sorrow." That is, what is added to life to make it of extraordinary length, embraces in it but little of enjoyment. The extending of our years beyond the period of health and vigor, so far from increasing, can only lessen the balance of our happiness. Of course, the solace of those religious comforts with which we sometimes see old age rendered serene and happy, are here to be thrown out of the question. So far as this world goes, it is certain that extreme old age brings with it a crowd of infirmities, inconveniencies and distresses, which far overbalance all the pleasures that can attend it. How striking are the Psalmist's words: "Yet is their strength labor and sorrow."

Even that vigor of constitution which protracts life beyond the ordinary limits, serves only to lengthen it out for the experience of weariness and pain. And is not this true? The days of life's decline are at best dying days. The vital current is fast ebbing away. The senses are blunted, if not destroyed—the channels of pleasure are dry—the body is crippled and infirm—the mental faculties have sunk into the imbecility of second childhood—the friends and associates of former years have all gone down to the grave. The subject of all this—and of how much more!—asks, "Where is the world into which I was born?"

He feels that he is a mere fragment cast up from the wreck of a bygone generation—a mere dependent and burdensome thing, incapacitated alike to add to the happiness of others, or to enjoy happiness himself. If this be true, surely the fact that some, here and there one, survive to an extraordinary age, does not at all throw light over the lamentable picture of human frailty; it rather deepens and darkens the gloomy colors, but above all, affords a still stronger argument for the importance of religion. If it is possible that before our departure from earth, we may be called to linger through a period, in which, if we have not the comforts of religion to cheer us, we shall be bereft of all solace, surely that period should be provided for.

Be assured, my dear friends, both you who are young, and you who are in middle age, the only effectual preparation for old age is the preparation for eternity. But here I find in God's own word an exhortation so

much better than any I can frame, that I choose to address that to you: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"—why? mark what follows; how direct it is to the point: "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened; nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves; and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened." (Eccl. 12:1-3)

This exhortation is couched in highly figurative language, but its general drift, I presume, is sufficiently obvious. The infirmities and maladies of old age are graphically depicted, and this for the purpose of showing the importance of remembering our Creator in the days of our youth. Yes, my friends, it is true that duty and interest imperatively demand that in early life we give our hearts to God. He who puts off this business to old age, or at all to the future, puts it off to a period he may never, he probably will never see;

and he who shall reach old age will find that he has postponed the matter to a time the most unfavorable of all his life.

Already, sinner, art thou involved in guilt and condemnation. The thunders of Sinai are out against you, and except you repent, you must certainly perish. I point you to Calvary!

We cannot doubt that some have cried to God in the eleventh hour, and he has heard and saved them; but such cases fall little short of

miracles. So infrequent are they, as to evince the folly and presumption of drawing encouragement from them to delay preparing for eternity. Besides, how difficult it is for an aged person to arouse himself, recall his wandering, bewildered, absent powers, and bring them to bear connectedly and energetically on any subject. Who shall attempt to kindle emotion in that bosom, bound up in the frosts of so many years of worldliness and sin?

Who shall attempt to turn that current, whose volume has been swollen and force augmented by the contributions of so long a period? Who shall presume to hope, after resisting so long a series of warnings and invitations, expostulations and entreaties, that, when the cup of life is drained to the dregs, Jehovah will then hear his call and be merciful to him? I do not say that it will not be so, but I do say, that it is presumption to expect it. And moreover, I declare, there is not one probability in a thousand, that under such circumstances there will be either the disposition or the energy of will to utter such a cry for mercy. Listen then now to your Maker's voice and regard

it—"I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." (Prov. 8:17)

I have thus, my hearers, endeavored to lay before you the lessons which I conceive are taught us by our text. We have seen that our life on earth, however lengthened out, must come to an end; that at the longest, it is but short; and that what is added to make up extraordinary old age is, after all, an addition of little that is to be desired. I have also endeavored, as I have proceeded, to apply and urge home on you these truths for your individual improvement. I have addressed this subject to you, because I could think of none more suitable to the occasion. I doubt not that if our aged and highly respected friend, whose decease has called forth this sermon, could return to earth, she would bear her testimony to the truth and the importance of every sentiment that has been advanced.

We trust that after so long a delay on the shores of time, our friend has been welcomed to a better world. For a very considerable time before her decease, and before the prospect of speedy departure, she was accustomed frequently and with the utmost fervor, to offer up prayer to God. Her situation has not admitted of my having many conversations with her, which, in themselves, could afford much satisfaction, although in one I was struck with the simplicity and evident sincerity with which she acknowledged the goodness of God in sparing her life, and

bestowing on her so many blessings through so long a series of years. That, notwithstanding her eccentricities and the abruptness of her address, she possessed one of the kindest of hearts, all who knew her will bear witness. In the relationships of this life, I am confident not one can be found who will deny that she was an affectionate relative, an indulgent mistress, a most excellent neighbor, and an ardent friend. We leave her in the hands of the merciful God, satisfied that the Judge of all-the earth will do right, and hoping, through the Redeemer's blood, to meet her one day in the bright and blissful presence of our Heavenly Father.

May all those who are left behind to mourn her loss, be comforted under this bereavement, and find their affliction sanctified to them for their spiritual and everlasting good. Especially, may our beloved sister, herself in the decline of life, and encompassed with the infirmities of age, be sustained and blessed in this trying season. May her last days be her best days; and when it shall please God to remove her hence, may she be gathered, like a shock of corn fully ripe in its season, into the garner of her Lord.

And may God, of his infinite mercy, enable each one of us to heed the admonitions both of his providence and of his Word. May he so teach us all to number our days, that we shall apply our hearts unto wisdom. Amen.



Every Non-Muslim is a Kafir

David Cloud
www.wayoflife.org, February 2016

According to Islam, humanity is divided into those who accept Muhammed as the prophet of Allah and those who do not. Those who do not are the Kafirs.

Kafir is the word that is used in the Quran, and it is a strong word. It is the word for Allah's enemies. It is the word for those who resist the truth. Kafirs are unclean, evil, cursed, ignorant liars and partners of Satan. "It is usually translated as unbeliever, but that translation is wrong. The word unbeliever is neutral. But the attitude of the Quran towards unbelievers is very negative. ... Kafir shows the common political treatment of the Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, animist, atheist and humanist. What is done to a pagan can be done to a Jew or any other Kafir" (*A Simple Koran*).

A Kafir is hated. "They who dispute the signs of Allah without authority having reached them are greatly hated by Allah and the believers. So Allah seals up every arrogant, disdainful heart" (Surah 40:35).

A Kafir can be enslaved. "Muhammed then said, 'Saed, give these people [the Jews of Medina] your verdict.' Saed replied, 'Their soldiers should be beheaded and their women and children should become slaves.' Mohammed, pleased with the verdict, said, 'You have made a ruling that Allah or a king would approve of'" (Sahih Al-Bukhari hadith 5,58,148).

A Kafir can be mocked. "On that day the faithful will mock the Kafirs, while they sit on bridal couches and watch them. Should not the Kafirs be paid back for what they did?" (Surah 83:34).

A Kafir can be schemed against. "They plot and scheme against you [Muhammed], and I [Allah] plot and scheme against them. Therefore, deal calmly with the Kafirs and leave them alone for a while" (Surah 86:15).

A Kafir can be deceived. "Mohammed asked, 'Who will kill Ka'b, the enemy of Allah and Mohammed? Bin Maslama rose and responded, 'O Mohammed! Would it please you if I killed him?' Mohammed answered, 'Yes.' Bin Maslama then said, 'Give me permission to deceive him with lies so that my plan will succeed.' Mohammed replied, 'You may speak falsely to him'" (Sahih Al-Bukhari hadith 5,59,369).

A Kafir can be terrorized. "Then your Lord spoke to His angels and said, 'I will be with you. Give strength to the believers. I will send terror into the Kafirs' hearts, cut off their heads and even the tips of their fingers" (Surah 8:12).

A Kafir can be beheaded. "When you encounter the Kafirs on the battlefield, cut off their heads until you have thoroughly defeated them and then take the prisoners and tie them up firmly" (Surah 47:4).

A Kafir can be annihilated. "So the Kafirs were annihilated. All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!" (Surah 6:45).

A Kafir can be killed. "If they do not keep away from you or offer you peace or withdraw their hostilities, then seize them and kill them wherever they are. We give you complete authority over them" (Surah 4:91).

A Kafir can be crucified and his hands and feet hacked off. "The only reward for those who war against Allah and His messengers and strive to commit mischief on the earth is that they will be slain or crucified, have their alternate hands and feet cut off, or be banished from the land. This will be their disgrace in this world, and a great torment shall be theirs in the next except those who repent before

you overpower them. Know that Allah is forgiving and merciful" (Surah 5:33).

A Kafir can be made war on and humiliated. "Make war on those who have received the Scriptures but do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day. They do not forbid what

Allah and His Messenger have forbidden. The Christians and Jews do not follow the religion of truth until they submit and pay the poll tax [jizya], and they are humiliated" (Surah 9:29).

A Kafir cannot be befriended. "Believers should not take Kafirs as friends in preference to other believers. Those who do this will have none of Allah's protection and will only have themselves as guards. Allah warns you to fear Him for all will return to Him" (Surah 3:28).

A Kafir is not to be treated with kindness. "Oh, you who believe, do not take My enemy and yours for friends by showing them kindness" (Surah 60:1).

Kafir is the word that is used in the Quran, and it is a strong word. It is the word for Allah's enemies. It is the word for those who resist the truth. Kafirs are unclean, evil, cursed, ignorant liars and partners of Satan.



Man's Helplessness & God's Compassion

From *The Pulpit Cyclopædia*, Jabez Burns Ed., 1851

"None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee," &c. — (Ezek. 16:5, 6)

Our text contains a description of the original condition of the house of Israel, and the surpassing condescension and compassion of God towards

them. This is followed by a recital of the apostasy and sins of the people against the goodness of the Lord their God. The fearful picture concludes with the announcement of God's

mercy and grace, notwithstanding their transgression against him. The text, however, is very applicable to the original state of every human being, and, contemplated as such, it is calculated to fill us with the spirit of humiliation, adoration, and praise. Observe:

I. OUR NATURAL ESTATE. This is most fitly represented:

1. As polluted. "Saw thee polluted." The fact of man's defilement by sin is abundantly established by the declarations of the word of God. All men are transgressors, and every kind of transgression defiles and pollutes the soul. The understanding is polluted by ignorance, the judgment by error and falsehood, the affections by earthliness and self, the conscience by wilful disobedience; so that the prophet's description of Israel is truly applicable to the unrenewed, unconverted children of men, Isa. 1:5, 8—"The whole head is sick," &c.

2. As outcasts. "But thou wast cast out." Sin and holiness cannot have communion with each other. The blessed God cannot be pleased with impure and polluted man. Thus angels were expelled the mansions of glory; thus Adam and Eve the abodes of Eden; and thus sin exiles every one of its victims from the divine presence and favor. The sinner is said to be afar off; alienated, &c. by wicked works; as rebels, outcasts from his kingdom as prodigals, far from our heavenly Father's house; dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death.

3. As unpitied. "None eye pitied thee." Angels are as holy and just as they are kind and benevolent. They could not feel for traitors against their God—could not delight in rebel spirits, or have complacency in iniquity. Fallen spirits rejoiced in ruining the hopes and blighting the prospects of mankind, and man had no pity towards himself. Deluded and perverted in all his faculties and powers, he saw not his shame, and felt not his misery.

4. As necessarily perishing. Dying of disease, of weakness, of exposure; dying for want of help. Consider the figure of an infant thus cast out—its helplessness—must perish. So our ruin had been certain, and unavoidable, and eternal. Notice,

II. THE COMPASSIONATE REGARDS OF GOD TOWARDS us.

He is represented as passing by and observing the condition of fallen, polluted humanity, and exercising mercy towards them. These regards

1. Were the result of rich and spontaneous mercy. No

reasons to induce Deity—none in the aspect of the sinner —

none in the cause of his ruin—self-destroyed —none in his solicitude for deliverance—none in the return he could make. It was mercy originating in mercy, for mercy's sake alone that caused him to bend over our ruined race. These regards,

2. Were expressed towards us in promises of love. "I said unto thee, Live." How analogous, too, the threatening was! Dying thou shalt die. But God, who was rich in mercy, when he saw our ruined state, promised deliverance and restoration. From the entrance of sin to our redemption, God filled the mouths of prophets with assurances of his grace and favor. By faith Abel and the patriarchs, and fathers, and prophets, looked through the promises given for the mercy of God to eternal life. These regards,

3. Were embodied in the person of the Mediator. That we might live he chose a Mediator. He sent him as the fountain of life. He came and proclaimed it. "I am come that ye might have life," &c. "I am the resurrection," &c. Yea, Jesus, as the exhibition of God's love, died in the stead of the ungodly, and bore in his own body our sins upon the tree.

4. A believing reception of God's merciful arrangement brings life into the soul. God now sends his messengers to invite the outcasts to live—to offer them life—to persuade them to have it, but to have it in Jesus, and in Jesus alone; and he that believeth the messenger of grace lives. God justifies him freely—saves him from condemnation—regenerates his heart by his quickening Spirit—raises to a new and holy life of faith in the Son of God, &c.; and this life is perfected and consummated in eternal glory. The gift of God is eternal life. This is the record that God hath given unto us, &c.

APPLICATION

1. Learn the wretched state of our fallen species. How necessary to see this clearly, and feel it intensely.

2. The unsearchableness of God's mercy. God only knows the love of God to man: "'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For oh, my God! it found out me "

3. That salvation is of grace. From first to last. The grace of God bringeth, applieth, and consummates the work.

4. The claims of Deity on our gratitude, love, and obedience.