

SALVATION FREE TO ALL MANKIND

John Wesley's View Linked to John Calvin's. MISSING LINK OF HARMONY

Pastor Russell Finds It Between Election and Free Grace—He Says That Every Sinner Will Yet Have Full Opportunity to Return to Divine Favor—"River of the Water of Life" is For the Non-Elect Alone.



Mt. Lake Park, Md., Sept. 3.—Although this is an after-season for the Camp Meetings, Chautauqua and other gatherings here, the after-season Convention of the International Bible Students now in session outlines all the in-season Assemblies of many years. The program is an extensive one.

During the ten days of the Convention addresses will be given by sixty ministers and instructors of the Association. The teachings are interdenominational, unsectarian. Pastor Russell of Brooklyn Tabernacle, and now also of London Tabernacle, is the President of the Association. He was the principal address of today. The auditorium was crowded. Probably in compliment to Methodists, Pastor Russell took for his text what he claimed was John Wesley's favorite—"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation xxii, 17). He said:

What Wesley Could Not Believe.
Our Methodist friends who own this spacious Auditorium have generally forgotten the special teachings of Brother Wesley, which brought them to the front of his denomination at a time when Calvin's theory of the election of saints to glory and the predestination of all others to eternal torture was the basic thought of Protestantism. Brother Wesley's voice rang out clear and full—"I cannot believe that God predestinated to eternal torture the masses of mankind before they were born. I must believe that God is Love and that His love and His justice would give to every sinner a full opportunity for return to Divine favor and to everlasting life through Christ. Brother Calvin, indeed, has certain Scriptures difficult to apply, respecting election and the elect, but I have one Scripture at least which tells of a freedom of Divine grace. The 'river of the water of life' is not declared to be for the elect, but for 'whosoever will.' I take my stand upon that text."

Brother Wesley's battle-cry—"God is Love and will surely give every member of Adam's race an opportunity for eternal life through Christ"—has come ringing down to our day. And although Christians have become sick and tired of their endeavor to harmonize the doctrines of Election and Free Grace and are now trying to forget doctrines altogether, nevertheless John Wesley's theory has overwhelmed John Calvin's. The vast majority of Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, etc., professing Calvin's tenets, really believe Wesley's—that God is Love and will surely give every member of our race a full opportunity for salvation, and that He predestinated none of them to eternal torture.

Truth in Both Theories.
There are elements of truth in both theories, as we now see: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and hence should understand the Bible better than did our forefathers, who did not have the wonderful Bible Christians now possess, with marginal references, concordances and other helps! Ability to read also is universal today. Oh, what manner of Bible students we should be! Many Christians, however, discouraged by the inconsistencies and contradictions of the various creeds, Catholic and Protestant, have abandoned their creeds and abandoned their Bibles also, erroneously believing the latter to be the basis of the former. We must not share this mistake. While doing all in our power to remove all the creed fences which divide God's people into sects and parties, let us hold fast to the Bible, the most wonderful Book in the world. It is only beginning to be understood; its true light is shining today as never before. We are in the time mentioned by the Prophet, when the 'wise shall understand' (Daniel xii, 10).

Brother Calvin was right in part—to the extent that he was in harmony with the Bible, which teaches us to strive to fulfill our Covenant with the Lord, that this we may "make our calling and election sure." It does not teach the predestination which Calvin taught and which Wesley objected to—the predestination of the wicked to an eternity of torture. The only predestination mentioned in the Bible is connected with the Church, the saints. God predestinated that none could be of the Church class, the Bride class, except such as would become copies of His Son, the Redeemer. That pre-

destination stands unalterable, but it has no effect upon others than the elect. It merely says that none except the saintly shall participate in the election. It says not one word about the fate of the non-elect. Read Romans viii, 28-30 and you will see this for yourself. To this, the Scriptural predestination, none can object. It is the unscriptural deductions which have caused us difficulty.

Brother Wesley was in exact accord with the Bible in his declaration that every member of our race must have a share in the grace of God in Christ. However, what Brother Wesley did not see was that the great Plan of the Ages is not confined to one century nor to one Age. He did not see that, while this Gospel Age is exclusively devoted to the selection of the Church class, invited to be "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife," there is a coming Age in which Christ and His glorified Bride will extend Divine mercy to the non-elect.

The Key to the Mystery
Is expressed in the Apostle's words, "In due time." Our great Creator need not be in haste. He has all eternity before Him. He allowed four thousand years to pass before He sent His Son to redeem the world and He has since taken nearly two thousand years in the selection of our Lord's elect Bride. He has appointed an additional thousand in which Jesus and His Bride, the glorified Church, will establish a reign of righteousness in the earth for the overthrow of sin and the uplifting of the sinners. Socially? Yes. Physically? Yes. Morally? Yes. Intellectually? Yes. Out of sin and death? Yes! Back to harmony with God if they will? Yes! No freer grace is imaginable than that which the Almighty has provided through the Savior. Of it St. Paul declares, "God wills to have all men to be saved and to be brought to a knowledge of the Truth." To this end He has appointed one Mediator, "who gave Himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Timothy ii, 4-6).

The "due time" for the Gospel call dates from Pentecost. But it is not a call for the world, but for a special class, the Bride class, to walk sacrificially in the footsteps of Jesus and to gain the great reward of joint-heirship with Him in His Kingdom. The "due time" for this work will soon be at an end—when the last probationary member of the Church shall have made his calling and election sure and when the "door into the marriage" shall shut. But the due time for the masses of mankind to hear of His grace and to respond thereto is still future, as Brother Wesley's favorite text will show us.

Before examining His text we will note the fact that three-fourths of the human family today are heathen in the most absolute sense of the word and many of the other fourth are heathen in a truthful sense. Why do they not see the grace of God in Christ? St. Paul answers, "Because the god of this world hath blinded their minds," because "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people" (II Corinthians iv, 4; Isaiah ix, 2).

But why does God not scatter the darkness and open all the blind eyes and unstop the deaf ears? We answer, because, although He has promised to do those very things, His due time for their accomplishment is not yet come. He merely calls His elect during this dark time, requiring them to prove their worthiness by walking faithfully in the dark: "We walk by faith and not by sight."

With the completion of the elect Church at the coming of the Redeemer—after the marriage, when she will be the Bride—then both Bridegroom and Bride will shine forth in glory, scattering all the darkness, ignorance and superstition of the world. Satan, the Prince of Darkness, will be bound and every evil thing shall be restrained and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the earth; all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. What will be the result? God's Word answers, that then "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God."

Brother Wesley's Proof Text.
Brother Wesley's loving heart found and tightly grasped the declaration, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation xxii, 17). This text, however, belongs to the coming Age, to the time when Messiah shall reign: "For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet" (I Corinthians xv, 25-29). There is no Bride yet to say, "Come."

The New Jerusalem Symbol.
The Church in her glorified condition after the "change" of the First Resurrection, after becoming the Bride, is symbolically represented as a City, as a Government—the capital of God's Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, which will then come to, or be established in, the earth—not a literal city, but, better, a symbolical one, of the Kingdom. It will be from under the Throne of that New Jerusalem, the Messianic Kingdom, that the "river of the water of life will flow, clear as crystal." On either bank of the symbolical river will be trees of life, whose leaves will be for the healing of the nations. Then will be their "due time" to come to a knowledge of the Truth that God loved them and did not predestinate them to eternal torture, nor to purgatorial suffering, but sent His Son to die for them—to pay their death penalty and thus to make possible their restitution to Divine favor (Acts iii, 19-21) and to all the earthly blessings, privileges and rights originally given to Father Adam—lost by his disobedience and redeemed at Calvary.

My dear friends, here we have the grandest and broadest Free Grace possible to be imagined, in connection with our Heavenly Father and His great salvation provided in Christ. As every creature shares in Father Adam's imperfection and dying conditions, so each one is to share in the merit of Christ's righteousness and sacrificial death; it shall be "testified to all in due time." There will be stripes, lessons, instructions, but they will all be corrective—with a view to the reformation and the regeneration of Adam and his race as human beings—not as spirit beings, not as angels; Adam and his race never were such. Only the Church has been begotten of the Holy Spirit to a spirit nature; only the Church will share in the resurrection to spirit conditions and be thus "like unto the angels."

This Is Not Universalism.
These two salvations, now of the elect, and during Messiah's reign of the non-elect, do not imply a universal salvation of our race, but merely a universal opportunity for everlasting life. The Scriptures most clearly teach a Second Death, like the first death, except that none will be redeemed from the Second Death, and none will be resurrected from it. It therefore will be, as St. Paul declares, an "everlasting destruction" (II Thessalonians I, 9). As St. Peter declares, the willful sinners against light and knowledge will perish, "like natural brute beasts."

The lessons from these great truths of the Bible are powerful. They make plain to us that none can hope to be of the heavenly class, of the Bride of Christ, except such as enter the strait gate and narrow way—the saints, the faithful, unto death. They teach us also, in harmony with other Scriptures, that those who now either see not and hear not, or who see and hear imperfectly, will miss this great "prize of our high calling." Nevertheless for these, heathen and others, God has provided more than they could have thought or asked—an opportunity for obtaining human perfection and a world-wide Eden-Paradise restored. It teaches, also, that every misstep, every failure to do our best, is costly—both to the world and to ourselves. To whatever extent the world demeans and degrades itself, it will have, in proportion, difficulty and stripes in connection with the possibilities and opportunities of recovery during Messiah's Kingdom.

Let us herald wide the story of the grace of God in Christ for every creature; let us show the love of God to all who have the eyes and ears of appreciation. There is no greater influence for righteousness than this—The love of God and the love of Christ constraineth us (II Corinthians v, 14). And in proportion as mankind receive the same their constraints toward righteousness increase. Thus, with clearer light upon our Father's Word, it is time for us all to cast aside the things of darkness and sectarianism which so long have separated the people of God from each other.

The Great Lesson of This.
The lesson to the Church is gratitude, loyalty, faithfulness to Him who called her out of darkness to the high calling of joint-heirship with the Redeemer. "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife," is to make herself ready by putting on the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit and being renewed and transformed.

The lesson to the world yet is only to those who, to some extent, hear it—that God is Love, that His mercy has provided a great opportunity for restitution that is high at hand; and further, the lesson is that every good and every evil deed will make their impression upon human character and have to do with the stripes, corrections, etc., of the future. Misimproved opportunities in the present life, violations of conscience, etc., will bring their reasonable retribution in the life to come and make the ascent more tedious and the more difficult. On the contrary, every good endeavor and attainment of self-control will be that much of an assistance for the future, when "the Spirit and the Bride shall say, Come, and whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely" and obtain perfection and everlasting life.

I trust that true Christian unity upon the basis of Divine Truth expressed in the Bible will be the keynote of this Convention to its very close. I trust that every soul in attendance may be so warmed and cheered and vivified by the Truth and its spirit that, going to his home, the blessing may be extended in overflowing measure.



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