

5. AS TO RECONCILIATION.

Be assured this is no question of lack of due esteem for any servant of the Lord *personally*, but the faithful examination of a system of teaching for which the nicest person in the world might be responsible. There has only been *one* Perfect Servant, and there never yet was a leader of note, who harmfully affected the saints or touched the faith once delivered to them, that was not eminent for piety and personal amiability. But these are no safeguard or guarantee against error into which the most pious may fall, especially if scripture and its study be slighted. The only standard of truth is the written word of God, and in divine things the *simplest* believer is bound to submit *everything* uttered or written, no matter by whom, even were it by an angel from heaven, to that infallible test in the fear and presence of God.

As for it being taught that reconciliation is not for sinners but saints, mark :

Is reconciliation for a christian or for a sinner? I do not think a sinner as such is conscious of wanting reconciliation. Would you preach the ministry of reconciliation to sinners? It would not be much good to them. Where is the ministry of reconciliation to be exercised? I think very much among those who believe. But do they need to be reconciled? I think so, if they are to be for the satisfaction of God (Truth for the Time, xi. p. 108).

Where it says We beseech in Christ's stead Be reconciled to God is that to believers? I think it is practical, the Corinthians had not left Adam for Christ. They were practically very much in Adam. They had believed in Christ. I do not doubt for a moment they were Christ's, and had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. But certainly judging from the epistle they had very little readiness to leave Adam for Christ. (American Notes, p. 178).

It would be difficult to find anything more at variance with scripture than this. Of reconciliation as a subject Paul alone treats, which he does in four of his epistles, but he leaves no one in doubt as to who its objects are. It is for "*enemies*" in Rom. v, it is for the "*world*" (not a world of saints but a world of sinners) in 2 Cor. v., it is for those at "*enmity*" in Eph. ii. and it is for "*alienated and enemies*" in Col. i. There is no getting away from facts like these. Hence to say that reconciliation "would not be much good to sinners," or that the ministry of reconciliation is to be exercised "among those that believe," when so unequivocally declared to be for enemies and a God-hating world, is to invert the truth.

Again, what could be worse than to apply "We beseech in Christ's stead, Be reconciled to God," to those whom we are told "had believed in Christ," "were Christ's" and "had received the gift of the Holy Ghost" as if they were *not yet reconciled*? Beseeching "Christ's" to be reconciled! Imagine, if you can, unreconciled "believers in Christ" and unreconciled "receivers of the gift of the Holy Ghost." Does the passage say it was believers, whether in a good state or a bad state, "God was in Christ reconciling?" Nay, but "reconciling the *world*"—a world of perishing sinners (2-Cor. v. 19). The fact is, the Corinthians were included in the "hath reconciled us to Himself" of ver. 18. "Be reconciled" was a pattern of how Paul preached to sinners as an ambassador of Christ, or sample—"word of reconciliation."

Further to say they "had received the gift of the Holy Ghost," and were still "very much *in Adam*," is to deny Rom. viii. 9. "But ye are not *in the flesh*," &c. They were alas! "practically" *walking* "very much" *after Adam*, but were not *in Adam*. Hence to apply either "unreconciled" or "in Adam" to the Christians at Corinth addressed as "the assembly of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (1 Cor. i. 2) is inexcusable.

As for its being the "removal of the man" that will be found iterated and reiterated with many other things equally contrary to the Word of God as follow :

In the cross there was the removal of the old man to the glory of God, but where that man was removed, the love of God was expressed. The latter gives you the covenant, the former reconciliation.

The difficulty with many of us as to reconciliation, is that we have looked at it as the reconciling of us to God, instead of seeing it the abolition of us that it might be in a new man. That is the idea. (American Notes, pp. 36, 39).

Reconciliation comes in here. One lesson is that you are removed. Not one bit of flesh is sanctified, you are sanctified, but not one bit of the flesh is sanctified.

The good of reconciliation to you is in the recognition that the man after the flesh is gone, that is, distance is gone because the flesh is gone. There was a complete setting aside in the death of Christ of the man who offended against God. Our old man is crucified with Christ. (American Notes, p.p. 45, 47).

You could not reconcile a man who is an enemy in mind by wicked works. He can only be so by being in another individuality (p. 190).

I think what reconciliation brings in is that you have changed your man (p. 172).

There is the sense of change from Adam to Christ. That is the point realised in reconciliation (American Notes, p. 173).

There is a distinction between the thought of the first and the Second Man, and that of the old man and the new man. The first man is superseded, the old man is removed. The first man is superseded by the Second, at the same time all that came in by the first, sin and death, are removed (p. 174).

In reconciliation Christ gets His place with us as Head (p. 178).

But it is important for us to see what reconciliation means. What I understand by it is that where distance was there is complacency (p. 326).

The distance has been removed in the removal of the man. I do not see in what other way God could remove distance. The distance came in by man, and the removal of the distance means the removal of the man. But the point is, where distance was now there is complacency (p. 327).

Reconciliation means the displacement of man and the introduction of Christ where man was.

Does reconciliation connect itself with new creation?

Quite so, how could Christ come in except by new creation (p. 329). Would you say that reconciliation is contained in the expression, No longer live I, but Christ lives in me? That is the principle of it. You cannot reconcile what is alienated, it is impossible to reconcile that which is at enmity. But the point is you are reconciled by being removed, and where distance was complacency is, because Christ has come in hence it is that reconciliation involves new creation (p. 330). You could not conceive of any process which would change the man who is "an enemy in mind by wicked works into 'holy,' unblamable and un-reprovable," no such process is possible even for God (p. 333).

This is such a chaos that one despairs of putting so many diverse and contradictory statements into intelligible order. Let us try to gather up: (1) the *different* things reconciliation is alleged to be, and (2) the *various* things for which it is obviously *mistaken*.

Cast your eye over these numerous quotations (which, being all from the American Notes, can be readily verified) and you cannot fail to perceive how reconciliation is represented as "the displacement of the

man," as "the removal of the *old man*," as "the abolition of *us*," as "that you have *changed* your man," as "the *sense* of change from Adam to Christ," as being "that Christ gets His place with us as *Head*," as "No longer live I, but Christ lives in me," as "where *distance* was there is complacency," as the "being in another *individuality*," as "that *you* are reconciled by being removed," &c.

All these things, and not so much as a scriptural thought of reconciliation in one of them! Nay worst of all, the very thing in which the truth of God declares reconciliation to consist, is point blank denied, and affirmed over and over again to be "*impossible*." For example, it is said, "You cannot reconcile what is alienated, it is impossible to reconcile that which is at enmity." On the contrary, where the individual is referred to, it is impossible to reconcile anything but that. It is precisely the one who is "alienated" and "at enmity" to whom reconciliation applies. Had it been said it is impossible to reconcile the nature, the "mind of the flesh" which is enmity, that would have been true, and because it is irreconcilable, God "condemned" it. But "*at enmity*" is the individual enemy, who is just the one who can be and is reconciled if we believe God through Paul.

Again, it is rashly asserted, "you could not conceive of any process which would change the man who is 'an enemy in mind by wicked works' into 'holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable,' no such process is possible even for God." The temerity of this is manifest, since it is no question of what man's puny intellect can "conceive," but what God that cannot lie has said in His word, viz.: "And *you* that were sometime *alienated* and *enemies* in mind by wicked works *yet now hath He reconciled* in the body of His flesh through death, to present you *holy and unblamable and unreprouvable* in His sight" (Col. i, 21, 22). Surely the presumption of maintaining that "no such process is possible even for God" in the face of His own plain word that He *has done it*, is, to say the least, unseemly.

Before, however, proceeding to the other items, it may be well to state what reconciliation really is, for it is simple enough if we keep to the language of scripture, where it always signifies one thing and only one. Just as "salvation" makes a *lost* man saved, "redemption" an *enslaved* man *free* or emancipated, and "justification" a *guilty* man without *charge*, so "reconciliation" makes of an *enemy* a *friend*, and turns a *hater* of God into a *lover* of God. Three questions will put the divine meaning beyond dispute.

1. To what aspect of man's condition by nature does reconciliation apply?

2. To whom and by what are the persons reconciled?

3. What is reconciliation as a definite blessing when received?

The divine reply to each is furnished by two verses in Rom v. :

1. Reconciliation is that *aspect* of the work of Christ, which meets our natural condition as *enemies*. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled" (Rom. v. 10).

2. Reconciliation is to God as Reconciler and *by* the death of God's Son as the procuring cause. "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

3. Reconciliation is that which when received enables us to *joy in God*. "And not only so but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus

Christ by whom we have now *received* the reconciliation" (ver. 11).

We have given Romans, because it is the simplest. To go into the Corinthian, Ephesian and Colossian aspects would occupy more space than we can spare, but they all tell the same tale as to *who* are its recipients and in *what* it consists, so that we are now in a position to look at the many and strange things for which reconciliation is mistaken.

Removal of the man is the principal misconception. There is not a word about the "removal" of any man in connection with reconciliation in the scriptures that speak of it. There is the positive reconciling of *enemies*, and reconciliation *received* as a definite present blessing by the reconciled ones, clearly stated, but nothing as to the man being removed. Confusion is apt to arise from the term "man" in these quotations being used in three different senses, namely, (1), "man" as the *individual*, (2) "man" as the *first* man contrasted with the Second, and (3) "man" as the *old* man contrasted with the new. Man the individual is not "removed," otherwise there would be nobody to reconcile. Man as the first man, though superseded by the Second, is not "removed," and though not Adam, but the Second Man is the ground of all God's present actings, yet second editions of the first man are being born into the world every day. Then though "our old man" has been "crucified *with* Christ" and "sin in the flesh" has been "condemned," yet in the sense of the old Adam nature, it is never said to be "removed," nor will be till we have our new bodies. Thus "removal" and "removed" so frequently used in the New Teaching phraseology, are not scriptural expressions at all, and God's word takes care not to employ them of the "man" in any of the senses. As the individual he is *reconciled*, as the first man he is set aside and *superseded*, and as the old man he is *crucified*, but "removal" is not said of any of them. It goes beyond the truth and overstates the fact. Nor is it the truth to say "All that came in by the first man, sin and death, *are* removed." The work is done by which they *will be*, but *sin* is not yet "removed" from the world; for, though the Lamb of God is the *taker* away of the sin of the world, yet it is not *taken* away till the new heavens and the new earth. Nor is *sin* "removed" from the Christian. All his *sins* are gone never to be remembered more, but if he said he had no *sin* he would deceive himself, for sin dwelleth in him. As for *death* that is the "last enemy" and is still to be removed. *Annulled* is said of "death" and of the "body of sin," but not "removed," and it is wisest to keep by scripture. Further to affirm "you are reconciled by being removed" has no sense. If removed, there is no one to reconcile, if reconciled that is the contrary of being removed. This comes of not distinguishing between the individual "I," the old "I" and the new "I." It is the individual "I" that is reconciled, the old "I" is never reconciled but has been *crucified* with Christ, and the new "I" needs no reconciling for it is Christ living in me. Hence the notion that reconciliation means the "removal of the man" never came from scripture. "Removed" is not the thought in reconciliation whether as to things or persons. That of "things" is *future*. "By Him to reconcile all *things*." But these, *when* brought into order and the defilement taken away by and by, are not "removed." That of *persons* is *present*, "yet now *hath* He reconciled," but the "individuals"

are not "removed" now, any more than "the things" will be then. The scriptural meaning of reconciliation is clear from 1 Cor. vii. 11. Does "Be reconciled to her husband" mean that either the husband or the wife is "removed?" They make it up.

Abolition of us is another thing for which it is mistaken. It is said "The difficulty with many of us as to reconciliation is that we have looked at it as reconciling us to God instead of seeing it the abolition of us, that it might be in a new man." "That is the idea." The utter wrongness of this strange notion, that, instead of "reconciling us to God," the very words scripture uses, the original discovery has been made that reconciliation is the "abolition of us" must be apparent to everyone. It is just *we* who are reconciled to God. "Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18). Something, however, is abolished; but it is never said *we* are. What is it then? It is the *enmity*. "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity," "having slain the enmity" (Eph. ii). Accordingly it is the *enmity* that is abolished, or annulled, and we, the *enemies* are reconciled or made at one. It is as simple as it is true. Nor is it "in" but "by" another Man.

Crucifixion is also misconceived to be reconciliation.

It is affirmed "The good of reconciliation to you is in the recognition that the man after the flesh is gone, that is, distance is gone because the flesh is gone. There was a complete setting aside in the death of Christ of the man who offended against God. Our old man is crucified with Christ." Scripture does not connect reconciliation with any of these things. They belong to a different side of the truth altogether. Besides they are exaggerations of even that to which they relate. The "man after the flesh" is the individual sinner, who is brought back to God, and is not "gone," but said to be washed, sanctified, justified, reconciled, &c. Nor is the "flesh" the same as the "man after the flesh." As "sin in the flesh" or evil principle, it is "condemned," but is not said to be "gone," for "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." There "was the complete setting aside" of the *first* man for the Second, but not "the man who *offended* against God," which is just a true description of every sinner. By the death of Christ for him, the "man that *offended* against God," the offender, is, on believing, *forgiven* all his *offences*, though *that* which led him to offend, the flesh or evil nature, is never forgiven. It is *forgiveness* that has to do with the *offence* of sin, not reconciliation. That has to do with the *enmity* of sin, and *neither* has to do with "our old man is crucified with Christ," as here misapplied, and where it is a totally different aspect of Christ's death; for "our old man" is not "reconciled" *by* Christ but "crucified *with* Christ." That is, it is not Christ's death *for* us, as is the case with reconciliation, but our death *with* Christ, which meets the case of "our old man." Being crucified with Christ is right enough in its place, but do not call it reconciliation. "Crucified" does not mean either "reconciled" or "removed."

Sanctification is likewise confounded with it strange to say.

It is stated "Reconciliation comes in here. One lesson is that you are removed. Not one bit of the flesh is sanctified. You are sanctified, but not one bit of the flesh is sanctified." Now why say "not one bit of the flesh is *sanctified*," when it is a question of being *reconciled*? Do they mean the same thing? Sanctification is a

different phase of the truth, and has to do with the *unholiness* of sin, while reconciliation has to do with the enmity of it; and it is just as true that not one bit of the flesh is *reconciled*, as not sanctified. Moreover it is also as true that *you* are reconciled as that *you* are sanctified. *You* are no more "removed" by reconciliation than you are by sanctification, nor is the flesh improved by either; but they are not interchangeable as here mistakenly assumed. Both are right and true in their respective places.

Headship too is wrongly taken for reconciliation.

It is asserted "In reconciliation Christ gets His place with us as Head." That Christ is Head of a spiritual race as Adam the head of a natural race, is a truth of scripture, as well as Head in many other senses. But we are *reconciled to God* as God, not to *Christ*, though by Him. God is the Reconciler, and was in the person of Christ, the Mediator, reconciling, and hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. It is all referred to *God*, and reconciliation is something between a God of *love* and His *enemies*, and is that by which they are made His *friends*. Headship on the other hand is referred to *Christ*, as the last Adam (in the sense of Headship of race, for there are other kinds of Headship). In this He is the Head of a new spiritual family and is the Firstborn among many brethren. But it is wholly distinct from reconciliation. It spoils both to make the one the other. It is all through inattention to what the word of God says that such unaccountable misapprehensions arise.

New Creation is mixed up with it in a strange way also.

Someone asks "Does reconciliation connect itself with new creation?" The reply given is "Quite so, how could Christ come in except by new creation?" No two things could be more distinct than reconciliation and new creation. They take us up from exactly opposite ends. Reconciliation has to do with people *alive* in enmity. New creation has to do with those who are *dead* in sins. The former is *by Christ*, the latter is *in Christ*. "If any man be *in Christ*, there is a new creation." Doubtless those who are reconciled to God *by* the death of His Son, are also God's *workmanship*, created *in Christ Jesus*, but they are two separate truths. Then what means "How could Christ come in except by new creation?" New creation is not Christ coming in, but *God* coming in, when *Christ* was dead, we being dead in sins, and by the exceeding greatness of His power raising Christ up, us together with Him, and co-seating us in the heavenlies *in Christ Jesus*. It is not Christ in, but *in Christ*. To confound this with reconciliation is to have neither according to God.

Change of man is erroneously thought to be reconciliation.

It is said to be "that you have changed your man," as well as that the "sense of change from Adam to Christ" is the "point realised in reconciliation." How could you or anyone else change the man? None but God could change the one man for the other, and He has done it. This we have to accept and recognise, a very different thing from *our* changing the man. God has substituted the Second Man for the first, and through our being dead *with Christ* and alive to God *in Christ Jesus*, *He* has dissociated us from Adam and associated us with Christ; but what has this aspect of the truth to do with reconciliation? Neither "with" Christ nor "in" Christ applies to it. It is "reconciled

to God by the death of His Son, by Jesus Christ to Himself."

Nearness is another thing confounded with reconciliation.

It is alleged "I do not see in what other way God could remove distance. The distance came in by man, and the removal of the distance means the removal of the man. But the point is where distance was, there is now complacency." There is a manifest confusion of ideas here. Is reconciliation a question of distance? By no means. It is hatred and variance. The opposite of distance is *nearness*, not reconciliation, and the "removal" of the individual "man" in that case would only make the distance greater. What is wanted is to bring the man, the sinner, *nigh*, which is just what God does. There is no such thought in scripture as *removing* distance by removing the *man* who is at a distance. God's way of removing distance is, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were *afar off* are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 18). Instead of protesting "I do not see in what other way God could remove distance," and thus daring to answer for Him, it would have been more becoming to let God Himself tell how He *has done* it, and abide by that. Anyhow reconciliation has not to do with distance, but with alienation and enmity.

Acceptance also is mistaken for reconciliation, for it is frequently insisted on as the "point" in it, that "complacency" is where there was distance. Here again is a strange lapse as to the true force of the term used. Complacency or good pleasure is not the opposite of *distance*, but of *displeasure*, and answers to the Father's loving us with the love of delight as He loves the Son—accepted in the Beloved. This is not reconciliation but acceptance. The complacency is on *God's* part, and to make that reconciliation would mean that God was reconciled to us instead of, as scripture invariably teaches, our being reconciled to God, that is, where enmity once was there is now amity, and where hatred to God was, there is love to, and joying in, God.

The peculiar aptitude which the New Teaching seems to have developed for inverting or turning truth upside down is phenomenal. It connects "removal" (itself a wrong thought) with *reconciliation*, and "love" with what it singularly enough miscalls a *covenant*, as if the *infinite* love of God could be put into any covenant. I turn to the word itself to find it precisely the contrary, and that it is just *love* which is characteristic of reconciliation. Not the love of *complacency* which characterises acceptance in the Beloved, but the love of *compassion* as in "God so loved the world." God did not leave man. Man left God. He was always the sinner's Friend, and hence never needed to be reconciled to us, but the sinner being an enemy needed to be reconciled to God. Paul, therefore, could not bring in reconciliation in Romans till God's love to His enemies was introduced, for the cross was the fruit, not the cause, of the love of God to sinful men. The Apostle had been treating of the *righteousness* side of things, which concerned man's *guilt*, and though he could and did speak of "justification" in that connection, he could not speak of *reconciliation* without first telling of "God commending His love *towards* us in that while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for us;" a very different thing from the "love of God shed abroad *in* our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us," for that is not His love of *compassion towards* sinners, but His love of *complacency* shed abroad *in* the hearts of His saints, to which

has been given the extraordinary appellation of "covenant." Reconciliation is always associated in the word with the sovereign compassionate *love* of God towards His *enemies*, and is that by which He makes these His *friends*, the opposite of *removing* them. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." That was Christ in His personal ministry on earth, and it is important to observe that it was in the *giving* of His Son, God's love to the *world*, was shown. God was seeking in the person of Christ to win the confidence of men's hearts, but for His love He got hatred. "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John xv. 24). The presentation of perfect goodness in Christ, alas! only served to bring out the evil as never before, and the terrible fact became manifest that man as such is *irrecoverable*. Had he responded, it would have proved there was good in man after all. Instead of this it only revealed the *enmity*. It was then very evident that man could not be reconciled by a *living* Christ as He walked this earth, he was too bad for that. What was to be done? Did God give up His love? Nay. But if man was to be reconciled to God, the enmity must be annulled. For that Christ must not only be *given* but *die*. Nothing short of *death* would meet the case. The consequence was that He went to the cross, and died to put away the very enmity that nailed Him to the tree. But the black cloud of God's judgment hangs over this Christ-rejecting world and there can be no blessing for it as the world until it is judged. Then there will follow the universal millennial blessing. Though what the world did to Christ only brings judgment on its own head, yet what God did to Christ when He was made sin, and what He there endured, so glorified God in all that He is, that He can afford to come out in His love to the sinner as never before, saving a persecutor like Saul of Tarsus, and actually taking the unique attitude of *beseeking*. Hence the "ministry of reconciliation" has taken the place of Christ's own personal ministry, consequent on His death, and is carried on through "ambassadors," its object being to save sinners *out* of the world that they may not be condemned *with* it, for its doom is certain. The world is like a vessel that has struck on a rock, namely Christ, and is a wreck. The "ministry of reconciliation" is not to repair the wrecked ship, the world, but to get sinners off the wreck and reconciled to God. Hence the "word of reconciliation," the message proclaimed to enemies, is "Be reconciled to God," that the reconciliation effected by Christ's death may be "received," and when thus received everything is set straight with God and the reconciled one is in free and happy accord without a jar, love being where the enmity was.

Now when all these things such as crucifixion, sanctification, headship, new creation, nearness to God, and acceptance in the Beloved are kept in their proper place according to Scripture, our blessing is enhanced and enriched, but if they are all mistaken for, and merged in, the one thing reconciliation see how much we lose and are robbed of.

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