

THE SON OF GOD.

The character of our Lord Jesus Christ has not only been the admiration of all his true disciples and followers since he passed that wonderful life narrated by the evangelists, but it has often been the theme of wonder and approbation on the part of many who were never ranked among his devoted adherents. It is only our purpose in this brief article to quote some of these expressions of admiration and praise as they have been drawn from different ones in contemplating the divine nature and character of the Son of God.

The oft-quoted and well-known eulogy of Rousseau, shows how he esteemed that perfect personage who is the subject of gospel narrative, as well as what impressions those extraordinary narratives made upon his mind. He says:

"How petty are the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, compared with the Gospels! Can it be that writings at once so sublime and so simple are the work of men? Can he whose life they tell be himself no more than a man? Is there anything in his character of the enthusiast or the ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his ways, what touching grace in his teachings! What a loftiness in his maxims; what profound wisdom in his words! What presence of mind, what delicacy and aptness in his replies! What an empire over his passions! Where is the man, where is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die without weakness, and without display? My friends, men do not invent like this; and the facts respecting Socrates, which no one doubts, are not so well attested as those about Jesus Christ. These Jews could never have struck this tone, or thought of this morality, and the Gospel has characteristics of truthfulness so grand, so

striking, so perfectly inimitable, that their inventors would be even more wonderful than he whom they portray."

On one occasion Napoleon said:

"From first to last Jesus is the same; always the same – majestic and simple, infinitely severe and infinitely gentle. Throughout a life passed under the public eye he never gives occasion to find fault. The prudence of his conduct compels our admiration by its union of force and gentleness. Alike in speech and action, he is enlightened, consistent, and calm. Sublimity is said to be an attribute of divinity: what name then, shall we give him in whose character was united every element of the sublime? I know men, and I tell you Jesus was not a man. Everything in him amazes me. Comparison is impossible between him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and his sentiments, the truth that he announces, his manner of convincing, are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things. His birth, and the story of his life; the profoundness of his doctrine, which overturns all difficulties, and is their most complete solution; his Gospel, the singularity of his mysterious being, his appearance, his empire, his progress through all centuries and kingdoms – all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery. I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above comprehension – great with greatness that crushes me. It is in vain that I reflect – all remains unaccountable! I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ."

– The Restitution.

Humanity seems bent on extreme views; like a pendulum, they are on one extreme or the other till they stop. Men rush to one or the other extreme according to their temperament, till they stop making a way or plan of their own, and accept of God's way – God's plan – then they reach the center of truth.

So on this subject of the Son of God; one class will affirm that he was an imperfect man, born under the curse like all other men, while another class will go to the other extreme, and claim that he was JEHOVAH himself. Both pass the center of truth while reaching the opposite extremes of error.

On the contrary, how guarded are the Scriptures on both these points – guarding us against both extremes and setting forth the truth, both beautiful and harmonious. On the one hand it assures us that there is the one supreme being – Jehovah: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6:4 – Young). To this testimony Jesus and the apostles give assent. Jesus declares, "I came...not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" – "My Father is greater than I" – at the same time assuring us that he and the Father were one in harmony and interest. The Apostle declares the same thing, saying, "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Cor. 8:6.)

And, again, the head of the woman is the man, the head of every man is Christ, and "the head of Christ is God" – the Father (1 Cor. 11:3 and 15:24).

On the other hand it assures us that he was without spot or blemish – undefiled, separate from the race of sinners – in him was no sin; he was holy [R463 : page 1] from his birth; that he lost not the right to live as do we, through Adam's sin, but that "in him was life," and no cause of death was found in him; and hence his death was a voluntary offering, as a payment of the penalty of our sins.

Yes, it is the plain teaching of the Word that he who had a higher form became a MAN – not an imperfect man, but a MAN – a full, perfect representative of the highest order of earthly beings. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:7,9). Compare, also, Phil. 2:6-11.

Dia. When this perfect man consecrated himself at baptism, he was begotten to a new nature, higher than human, higher than angelic, higher than the nature he had laid aside to become a man – the Divine nature – "so much better than angels."

But this divine nature in Jesus was not attained until the consecrated human nature was fully dead – only an earnest of the coming nature could the man Jesus receive.

When Jesus was among men, the natural superiority of a perfect man, the natural crown of "glory and honor" – attaching to an unblemished Lord of earth – caused him to shine among men, so that his enemies said, "Never man spake like this man," and the multitudes hung on his words, and, if he had not hindered, would have taken him by force and made him a king. Even as a lad he was able to confound the most learned of his nation. So much, at least, may be said of Jesus as a perfect man. Added to these natural powers were the special gifts of miracles which were given him as attesting that he was owned of God. Yet, it should be remembered, that it was not the miracles which specially marked him as above other men; for miracles, and even raising of the dead, had been done by Prophets centuries before. That which impressed the above writers, and all thinking people, when studying the record of Jesus, is the grand perfection of his being – of his acts and his teachings.

Nor, should we so much wonder at this, if it were but borne in mind that the perfect man was an earthly IMAGE (in qualities and powers) of the Creator.

While, then, truth – a right appreciation of our Lord Jesus – is desirable at any cost, we can see more reasonable excuse for that extreme error which would denominate him Jehovah, than for that other extreme which would class him among the sin-cursed, imperfect and depraved race from which Scripture declares he was separate.

Lest some should forget previous expressions on the subject, let us state that we hold that when the sacrifice of the perfect human nature was ended, the Father highly exalted Jesus to the perfection of the Divine nature, far above angels and every other order of creation – next to the Father.
