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that the mountains are frequently referred to as the most stable and permanent feature of the world, it is easy to see that the Creator of the mountains must be most-excellent in power.

We have arrived then at the conclusion that while 'el shaddai stresses the sovereign power of God, we are no longer in a position to know the precise ideas which the name will have summoned up for the Patriarchs.

We also have the combination 'el 'olam, the Everlasting God, in Gen. 21:33, with the resultant use of ha-'o lam, the Eternal in Dan. 12:7.

(To be continued)

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

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(1. Prologue, Ch 1: 1-18)

Ch. 1, v. 3.—*All things were made by Him*;—Here it is concisely affirmed that the Word was the agent of God in creation. This sums up the teaching of Gen. 1, where the record of each creative day is introduced by the clause 'And God said.' In Ps. 33:6 this is interpreted to mean that God accomplished His work of creation by means of His Word; in the Wisdom literature it is interpreted to mean that He did so by means of His Wisdom (*cf.* Prov. 3:19; 8:30; also Ps. 104:24). In the N.T. the creative Word or Wisdom of God is identified with Christ not only here but also in Col. 1:16 f. ('in Him were all things created . . . in Him all things consist') and Heb. 1:2 ('His Son, . . . through whom also He made the worlds').

And without Him was not anything made that hath been made.—This repeats in a negative and still more emphatic form the statement of the preceding clause: not even one thing (Greek *oude hen*) came into being apart from the Word. The emphasis may be intended to refute some incipient forms of Gnosticism which ascribed creative activity to other spiritual beings.

v. 4.—*In Him was life*;—This clause is sometimes taken closely with the preceding in such a way that second half of v. 3 and the opening words of v. 4 run (as in R.V. margin): 'and without him

was not anything made. That which hath been made was life in him.' Westcott says truly, 'It would be difficult to find a more complete consent of ancient authorities in favour of any reading, than that which supports the second punctuation.' Yet punctuation must depend on the most natural sense of the wording. If the marginal reading ran, 'That which hath been made *had* (or *has*) life in him,' a strong case could be made out for adopting it. But 'That which hath been made *was* life in him' seems an unnatural way of saying what is certainly true—that all living things have drawn their life from the Divine Word. We prefer the punctuation given in the R.V. text, which states absolutely that life was in the Word, and implies that all created things that live derive their life from Him.

And the life was the light of men.—Whether we think of the natural illumination of reason which is given to the human mind, or that spiritual illumination which accompanies the new birth, we can have neither apart from the life that resides in the Word. But, as appears immediately, it is the spiritual illumination that dispels the darkness of sin and unbelief that the Evangelist has in mind.

v. 5.—*And the light shineth in the darkness;*—In the old creation, 'darkness was upon the face of the deep' (Gen. 1:2) until God called light into being; so too in the new creation (in which the Word is God's agent as much as in the old) there is a spiritual darkness which only the light that shines in the Word can drive away. It is implied that the world of mankind is a fallen world.

And the darkness apprehended it not.—The exact force of the Greek verb *katalambano* has been much debated: does it mean here 'apprehend,' 'comprehend,' 'receive' or 'overcome'? In all probability the last alternative is the best; we should render with R.V. margin, 'the darkness *overcame* it not.' This is true of ordinary light; a little candle can dispel a roomful of darkness and not be overcome by it. Light and darkness are opposites, but they are not opposites of equal power. Light is stronger than darkness; darkness cannot prevail against it. So John gives the lie to those religious and metaphysical systems that involve an essential and eternal dualism between light and darkness, good and evil. The Light of the world Himself could not be overcome by the power of darkness, for all its hostility; and similarly the darkness cannot overcome those who walk in the light (John 12:35). But

before the portrayal of the Word as light is developed, a prose section is dovetailed into the poetry of the Prologue (vv. 6-8).

v. 6.—*There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.*—The Apostolic Preaching, the Gospel as proclaimed by the apostles in the most primitive age of Christianity, appears regularly to have told the story of Jesus, 'beginning from the baptism of John' (Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24; cf. Mark 1:1-4). And our Evangelist is faithful to the pattern of the original Preaching; all its essential elements are reproduced in this Gospel. He makes it plain that the doctrine of the Divine Word is no timeless truth, unrelated to this earth and its history; on the contrary, the doctrine of the Word has no real meaning apart from One who was first publicly manifested to men when witness was borne to Him by the man sent from God, whose name was John. It has often been pointed out that this John is never identified as 'the Baptist' in this Gospel; the Evangelist is careful to distinguish others who bear the same name, such as Judas Iscariot and Judas 'not Iscariot' (John 14:22), but he does not distinguish John the Baptist from John the apostle: indeed, he never mentions the latter by name. This is easily understood if the Evangelist was himself John the apostle. The statement that John was 'sent by God' is illuminated by the full narrative of his birth and prophetic commission which Luke gives in his Gospel (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1 ff.).

v. 7.—*The same came for witness, that He might bear witness of the Light, that all might believe through Him.*—This brief statement of John's witness-bearing anticipates the fuller account of his testimony in v. 15 and vv. 19-34. It also introduces one of the leading themes in this Gospel—the theme of witness. The witness to the truth of God's revelation through the Word is manifold: it comprises the witness of the Father (John 5:32, 37; 8:18), the witness of the Son (John 8:14, 18), the witness of the Spirit (John 15:26), the witness of the works of Christ (John 5:36; 10:25), the witness of Scripture (John 5:39), the witness of John the Baptist (John 5:33 in addition to Ch. 1), and the witness of the disciples (John 15:27), including that of the beloved disciple, the Evangelist himself (John 19:35; 21:24). And the purpose of this manifold witness to the truth is that men might believe.

v. 8.—*He was not the Light, but CAME that He might bear witness of the Light.*—In pointing out that John himself was not

the light, the Evangelist may have in mind a body of people, surviving at the time when the Gospel was written, who looked back to John as their founder and venerated him as the one through whom God made His final revelation to men. We know little about these people, however; it is very doubtful if we should think in this connection of the twelve disciples at Ephesus, mentioned in Acts 19:1-7, who knew no baptism save that of John. It is even more precarious to connect them with the Mandaeans, a small community resident in Iraq which practises a religion of Gnostic origin, in which a mythological recasting of the story of John the Baptist plays an important part.

If the Evangelist says that John 'was not the light,' it is noteworthy that Jesus describes him as 'the lamp that burneth and shineth' (John 5:35). The function of a lamp is to let the light be seen. This was our Lord's estimate of the quality of John's witness.

v. 9.—*There was the True Light, EVEN THE LIGHT which lighteth every man, coming into the world.*—We might render more simply, as in the first alternative of R.V. margin, 'The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world.' The main point to notice is that the phrase 'coming into the world' refers to the true light, and not to 'every man' (as it is made to do in A.V. and in the second alternative of R.V. margin). There is no illumination which does not proceed from the true light. Whatever measure of truth men in all ages have apprehended has been derived from this source. Justin Martyr was not wrong when he maintained that Socrates and the Stoics and others who had lived in conformity with reason (Gk. *logos*) were truly, if unconsciously, directed by the pre-incarnate Christ. But the illumination that our Evangelist is really thinking of here is that spiritual illumination which dispels the darkness of sin and unbelief; and it was by His coming into the world that the true Light brought this highest illumination—and brought it for all men. He is the Light 'which lighteth every man' in the sense that the illumination which He brought when He came is for all without distinction. There are, however, those who refuse to come to the light (*cf.* John 3:19 f.). If they remain in darkness, it is not because there is no light for them, but because they deliberately prefer the darkness. But this ninth verse anticipates the theme which is elaborated in more than one place throughout

this Gospel—that Christ is ‘the light of the world’ (John 8:12; 9:5).

v. 10.—*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.*—But the world, although it was made by Him, as has already been said in v. 3, did not recognize the Divine Word, the true Light, although He was present in it. As Paul puts it, ‘they refused to have God in their knowledge’ (Rom. 1:28). What was true of mankind in general was true of the people of Israel in particular, as the prophets had reiterated (*cf.* Jer. 9:6, ‘through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord’). And it remained true when the Word of God drew nearer to men than had ever been possible in Old Testament days.

v. 11.—*He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not.*—He came to His own place, or more literally, as R.V. margin has it, to ‘his own things’ (Gk. *eis ta idia*, the same phrase as is used in John 19:27, where the beloved disciple takes the Virgin Mary ‘unto his own home’). The world was His own place, for He made it; in a more special sense, the land of Israel was His own place, for there dwelt the people of whom, as concerning the flesh, He came. Yet His own people—whether the inhabitants of the world in general, or the nation of Israel in particular—gave Him no welcome when He came. They were ‘His own’ by right, but they would have none of Him. Thus stated starkly and absolutely, the paradox is a grim one. But its grimness is not unrelieved. Had none at all recognized or welcomed Him, darkness would indeed have prevailed over the world. But there were some who received Him gladly, and for these the designation ‘His own’ is later reserved. Over chapters 1–12 we may write: ‘His own received Him not.’ But over chapters 13–20 we may write, in the opening words of the following verse, ‘But as many as received Him. . . .’ And it is at the beginning of these later chapters that the title ‘His own,’ hitherto used of those who proved unworthy of it by their refusal to acknowledge Him, is bestowed upon those who did accept Him: ‘having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end’ (John 13:1). As in the days when the word of the Lord came through the prophets, so in the days when the Word became incarnate in Christ, the true Israel was embodied in a believing remnant.

v. 12.—*But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God.*—The remnant who did give Him a welcome when He came inherited all the blessings and privileges which everyone might have received through His coming, had they not turned their backs upon the light. And these blessings and privileges are summed up in this, that He bestowed upon them a spiritual birthright as members of the family of God. In them, as the same writer tells us elsewhere, the seed of God abides, because they are 'begotten of God' (1 John 3:9). To enter the family of God, then, one must receive Him who is the Incarnate Word of God. Or the idea of receiving Him may be alternatively expressed.

EVEN to them that believe on His name:—To receive the Incarnate Word, to believe on His name—these are two ways of describing the same attitude. The 'name,' as regularly in the Bible, means much more than the mere designation by which someone is known: it means the real character, or at times, as here, the person himself. To receive the Incarnate Word, then, means to place one's faith in Him, to yield one's allegiance to Him, and thus in the most practical manner, to acknowledge His claims. (The expression 'many believed on his name' is used in John 2:23 in a weaker sense, to denote those who accorded Him an outward assent without an accompanying inward allegiance.)

v. 13.—*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*—(The verb *egennethesan* means 'were begotten' rather than 'were born'.) Those who believe on His name experience a spiritual birth. Here we have an anticipation of the fuller statement of the new birth which we find in Chapter 3. The repeated negatives of this verse are calculated to emphasize as strongly as possible that to be begotten of God is completely different from physical birth. This divine birthright has nothing to do with racial or national or family ties. It is of no use to be descended from Abraham in the natural order if one is not a child of Abraham in the only sense that matters before God—by reproducing Abraham's faith. Physical birth, membership of a family in the natural sense, is a matter of blood-relationship; it results from the will of the flesh, from the desire of a man (*aner*, a member of the male sex; not simply *anthropos*, a human being). But spiritual birth, membership of the family of God, depends on quite different factors; it results from acceptance of Christ, from faith in Him.

There is an interesting variant reading of this verse in some Old Latin texts (supported in part by one Old Syriac manuscript), which replaces the plural by the singular. The end of v. 12 and beginning of v. 13 then run: ' . . . even to them that believe on the name of Him who was begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man . . . ' If this reading were established, it would, of course, be a Johannine testimony to our Lord's Virgin Birth. But it has no support in our Greek authorities, and cannot be accepted. Yet the Evangelist may have chosen his words carefully so as to suggest an analogy between the spiritual birth of believers and the birth of Christ Himself.

(To be continued)

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

By FREDK A. TATFORD

The incarnation of the Son of God was an essential to the redemption of the race: as sin came into the world by man, so also must atonement be made by man. Adam's race was universally tainted by sin: God, therefore, Himself became man so that there might be a sinless vehicle through which redemption could be effected. When the Word became flesh, it was patently necessary that this should take place in such a way that there should be no transmission of a sinful nature. Hence, Christ entered the world by a virgin birth. 'It was in every way most fitting,' writes Professor Addis, 'that he should enter the world in a new manner, breaking the long chain of birth which had transmitted sinful inclination from age to age, and inaugurating a new order. A fresh start had to be made, and He Who was untouched by the carnal passion was to raise us from "the death of sin to the life of righteousness". . . Christ was not an ordinary man. He is, in a sense absolutely unique and incommunicable, the Son of God, free from the least taint of sin, the Head of a redeemed and renewed humanity. That being so, the Virgin Birth is no longer a difficulty.'

When Adam was brought into being, it was by the creative power of God and without the necessity for human parents. When Eve was born full-grown, it was without the instrumentality of a