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Fellowship with God--the divine purpose

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Fellowship with God - the Divine Purpose
by
John C. Willits
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Fellowship with God — the Divine Purpose.

To be useful was undoubtedly the purpose in the mind of the Deity concerning all the objects of His creation. It is hard indeed to think of anything that God has made, as being useless. Every object about us — whether animate or inanimate — was formed with a purpose of being of some use. The objects about us which seemingly have no purpose in this world, but to torment and perplex, would, doubtless, if we could comprehend with an infinite knowledge of things, appear to be of inestimable value. If man had lived in Edenic purity and simplicity, nothing ^{would} appear superfluous, or inconsistent with the divine plan or purpose. But the introduction of the sin element into the world has left its impress here as in all other things. The Edenic harmony has been destroyed, and with its destruction comes our inability to see the end of purpose and unwillingness on our part to abide the consummation of the divine plan. The fault, then, lies with our own limited view

of things and inability to grapple with an eternal plan - a divine purpose - and not with the purpose of things for which they were created. So accustomed are we to viewing things with our imperfect understanding of them and their purpose, that we are always confessing our belief as to the utter uselessness of objects about us. So it is that the finite ever seeks to criticise the Infinite, in His plans and modes of working. But the fault lies not in the divine purpose of things created, neither is it in Gods methods of work, nor is the fault in the object itself. If things appear useless to me, we are compelled to go for an explanation to something objective to them, and subjective to ourselves.

There is a purpose in all things, eternal and immutable as God himself, and this purpose demands that a harmony should exist also. But the sin element has destroyed our harmony ~~with~~ with God, and thus hides from our view his eternal purpose.

Thus with the destruction of a perfect harmony between God and man, and with the loss of sight of His purpose and plan, has also been destroyed the conception of God. So we find existing among the people of the world ideas of God - or the Creating Power - as diverse as their customs and manners. Their ideas of him are vague and indefinite, crude and barbaric. So that we find some idea among all people, shaped and fashioned by the environments that surround them. According to their hopes or fears is their idea formed. Either a merciful loving God - as the Jehovah of the Hebrew nation - greets us in our research, or a vague, indefinable, all pervading power, as among the Hindoos, or a cruel merciless being, void of all love and sympathy for men, desiring rather the bloody sacrifice of human souls than their loving service, as among the Incas of Peru, or as the cold, unlovable object of the worship of the wild hordes of America.

With such vague and indefinite ideas of the person of God must necessarily follow correspondingly vague and indefinite ideas as to fellowship with Him. To become united with such a God as Buddhism would force upon men, is extremely difficult thing; or to attach ones self to such a monster of human outrages and sacrifices as is worshipped by the Incas, or to Moloch of Jeremash that king Solomon introduced as contemporaries with the God of the Hebrews into Israel, is not very inviting. Only fellowship with such a God as the God of the Hebrew nation, can carry with it any real joy or satisfaction or comfort to the human heart. Only such a Being that can be touched by the prayers and needs of men; who can be moved by the desires of men; who can return to man a loving peace; for the affections bestowed upon Him, can hold out any inducement for fellowship with Him. Such a being is the Christian God. It is to Him, and Him alone, that prayer can

be addressed with any degree of satisfaction; it is on Him, and Him alone, on whom the affections of a loving heart can be bestowed with any certainty that it will be returned in loving deeds; it is to Him, and Him alone, that men can come feeling that their needs can be supplied and the defects of their moral nature remedied.

Such a God, full of love toward man, ever desirous of making man the constant recipient of his acts of kindness, ever desirous to blot out all the imperfections of man forever, such an One is it who permits a loving, living fellowship from man toward Himself. And such a fellowship did most certainly exist at one time. Looking into the History of the Religions of the world we are enabled to draw any other conclusion. All point to a time, far removed from our present day, when men lived in such close relationships with the creator that they had perfect fellowship with Him. Some of these myths to be

sure are very confused and oftentimes inconsistent. Many of them take much sifting to get at their meaning, and then are far from being perfectly clear. But remarkably strange is it, that however diverse the idea of God may be, and however inconsistent many of them are within themselves, and however widespread may be our research, we find in almost every instance an idea in some form that points back to a time when there was a unity of the human race and close fellowship of the common ancestors with God. Such facts go very far in substantiating the Biblical account of the Fellowship with God of the first pair in Eden.

And what if some of these accounts are very imperfect? What if some of them are so distorted as to be almost unintelligible? Can anything else be expected? Can we reasonably expect to find any other condition of things among any people, where the art of writing was wholly unknown, where oral tradition was

the only method of transmitting from one generation to another and from one century to another, among whom fear had taken the place of love and despair the place of hope, whose intellects were clouded and benumbed by generations of tribal and barbaric life? The difference in these legends and accounts have no bearing upon the subject in hand. The fact that we do find in all, or nearly all, the religions of men an idea pointing to a primitive fellowship with God, is strong proof in favor of our main proposition.

If these myths and stories ceased here there could be no doubt in any rational mind of such a state, but they go still further. They also point to a time when man lost his fellowship with God.

And as universal as is the human race, so universal do we find the story of the entering in of the sin element and the consequent loss of harmony with God.

When and how this took place many fail to give us any knowledge. Many on the other hand give us a confused and very contradicting account. Yet whenever found the central idea seems to be the same, and strange enough somewhat similar to the Genesis account of the fall. Thus it is, by the entering of this sin element into the lives of men that they have lost that primitive fellowship with God and therefore can see and understand so little of God's plan and purpose.

But however far removed from the primitive condition the race now seem to be, we find on every hand a deep, inextinguishable desire to come into harmony and fellowship with God. The bloody sacrifices, of the savage races, shows a desire on their part to atone for something and to come into harmony with some one. The meaningless forms of worship found among so many of the heathen tribes, point to the fact that they are

yearning, and groping their way in darkness as best they can, in order that they may be restored to that primitive fellowship with God. All religions and customs, whether they are the outgrowth of faith or fear, of hope or despair, of love or hatred lose their significance unless we acknowledge that insatiable desire to become reconciled with their idea of God. And it matters not whether it is the enlightened Caucasian in his endeavors to become reconciled with the God of the Bible, or the follower of Mohamet, or the pagan of India, or the savage red man of America — all are seeking in their most enlightened way to find peace with their ideal God. Everywhere that man is found, there we find a sense of dependence exerting itself within him, causing him to seek a more perfect knowledge of that being upon whom he relies. So also do we find that "expression of personal guilt and condemnation".

If not, why all these sacrifices? Why all the

mutulations of body? Why all this striving and yearning after the ideal of fellowship? Thus we may traverse the whole realm of human history, and we will find traces of that divine purpose - fellowships with God.

And not only in the history of the lives of men do we find this true, but also in the manifestation of divine power in the works of nature. For what are these mighty works of nature, if not for the comfort and blessing of man? Why should God create this universe and place it in such harmony, and then place it in subjection to man, if he did not thereby intend to give him comfort and pleasure.

Thus with all these manifestations about him, man is led to acknowledge the divine goodness and love and see in His plan some purpose, even to draw him to Him as the true object of worship and praise. And there cannot be any worship and praise unless there is some common ground. This may be imagined to be the bloody altar of sacrifice - animal or human - or the penitent sinner, where His supremacy is acknowledged, but whatever or wherever this common ground

may be, its ultimate aim is to bring the worshiper into fellowship with God.

Turning aside from the myths and legends of the ages; leaving the dark and subtle forms of speculation and philosophy of the heathen world; closing our eyes to false religions and ideas of God; laying aside the somewhat doubtful interpretation of nature, let us look to the more direct manifestations of the one true God - the true ground of all religious hope and faith as seen in the revelation of Himself in His Word, and in the person of ~~the Jesus~~ Jesus Christ, and in the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

From the very time when God said "Let us make man" his purpose for mans fellowship with him has been manifested. The placing of the first pair in Paradise, the placing of all things of physical creation under the control of man, point unmistakably to this purpose in the Divine mind.

The selection of Abram to make a covenant

with for his seed forever, shows that although the sin element had entered in, yet it was not able to overthrow Gods eternal plan. The eternal love of God towards man ever asserts itself - overrides all difficulties, overcomes all sin. Though his covenant people were often the recipients of his most severe punishment, yet amid all this do we hear him saying, that these things are for the punishment of sin, but his eternal purpose must manifest itself. The great "I AM" never forgets his promise, nor swerves from his purpose.

Accordingly we find a marked degree of progress through the entire Old Testament history, showing that Gods plan is steadily unfolding itself. The wonderful manner in which he so often appeared to Moses looked, at times, as though His plan was nearly consummated. His presence so marked to the children of Israel, as he went before them in a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, yet because of sin, while he seemed so near, he was far from having fellowship of men because of their estrangement from Him.

So the Divine purpose must manifest itself in some other way. There must be some common ground of union revealed to man, and so Isaiah looking into the dim future saw the eternal purpose and caught a glimpse of that common ground in the God-man, who he says shall be called Immanuel. Thus it is that to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ that we must look for the perfect unfolding of his eternal purpose and the means adequate to bring it about. Not until all the world can see and know and feel the influence of that divine life upon the earth, can all the world understand that deep, inextinguishable desire of the human soul to have fellowship with the Creator. In Jesus Christ do we find explained the mystery of the ages, the hopes and fears, the lofty aspirations and disappointed anticipations of man.

What a thrill of joy the ever blessed words of our Saviour must carry to the human heart, in its endeavors to extricate itself from bondage and find peace with God, when He

said "And we will come unto him and make our abode with him", and those other words spoken a little later "That where I am, there ye may be also." It is such language as this that points to the fact that the eternal purpose is for mans fellowship with God.

So in the Old and New Testament revelations of God do we unmistakably read this one thing.

But the means whereby this fellowship is accomplished we find in the person of the Holy Spirit. He who is to guide men into all knowledge of things, who is to be the reproof of sin, the quickener of slumbering conscience, to him is left the work of bringing men into this fellowship. The moment therefore that men come into a vital communion of the Holy Spirit, they are brought into fellowship with God.

Then our usefulness is enhanced, objects about us begin to appear service-able. God's purpose is consistent. All things have taken on new coloring. Life has new significance,