

THE PLANT OF RENOWN AND THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

BY DR. THOMAS'S DAUGHTER.

REFERRING to recent criticisms on the doctrine advocated by the *Christadelphian* concerning Christ, Dr. Thomas's daughter says:—

“It appears almost singular how views so different and opposite can be taken of the same author, as seen from different standpoints. We have failed to discern in your teachings concerning the nature of Christ, any of the ideas attributed to you. We have never understood you to teach that the substance of the body of Christ was a ‘mixture of human and divine substance,’ although you do hold that the operation of the Spirit of God, in and through the ‘body prepared,’ was according to the Scriptures from the beginning of its formation.

Why should this be so perplexing to many? Why is it not as easy to comprehend ‘the union of Spirit with flesh.’ as to understand the union of Spirit with the manna in the wilderness? The Spirit preserved the manna from decomposing, yet it was manna in substance still—suitable for food to sustain natural life.

It would scarcely become a question in our minds whether the Spirit had transformed the substance of the manna into ‘semi-Spirit substance.’ Why, then, should it be more difficult to realise that Spirit operation upon flesh substance should *animate* the flesh without changing the substance? The Spirit of Deity being subject to the will of Deity, would perform no more and no less than He purposed it to accomplish.

The power that divided the waters of the Red Sea, and brought water out of the flinty rock, could also, under fiat of the same sovereign will, bring forth a ‘Plant of Renown.’ Plants grow from seed or roots embedded in the earth. Yet, if not subject to the subtle, penetrating, vivifying influence of the sun's rays, they would never come to maturity. Naturalists know well how to estimate the electrical power and life-giving agency of the sun's rays, without which no vegetation would mature, and nature would remain shrouded in eternal winter. And still they do not contend that the plants or the seed have incorporated a particle of the substance of the sun, but simply the electrical influence of its rays.

One of your critics makes the extraordinary assertion that the ‘seed of woman’ cannot be understood to mean the seed of woman physiologically. If this were true, then of what value are the testimonies which trace the descent from Abraham and David according to the flesh?

The prophet Isaiah says: ‘He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground.’ With this beautiful figure, we associate the idea of parent earth and

Spirit sun in combination. The plant derives nourishment from both, though of a different kind and different nature, yet the substance of the plant remains the same.

We sometimes derived much assistance in studying the figures borrowed from nature, although they may not in every particular be fitted to the heavenly subjects represented. The figures presented in the Word will, doubtless, be more appropriate than those of our own choosing. The 'Tender Plant,' to which we refer, receiving nourishment from its mother earth—colour, size and mature growth from the rays of its father sun, grew and developed to a 'Plant of Renown.' 'The child grew and waxed strong in Spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.' Although this plant was to be laid low for a time, it was not doomed to decay, because the Father's Spirit preserved it from decomposition, raised it up again, transplanted it into a heavenly atmosphere, where it fully expands into the 'Tree of Life:' retaining life, and giving life to as many as shall be engrafted upon it in the appointed way.

It is further asserted that the Word was made flesh *only* at the time of anointing with Holy Spirit and baptism. Here we are puzzled again with mathematical definiteness, without reference to the harmonious grouping of testimonies. Is it to be maintained that the wisdom or thought of Deity was not at all incorporated with the mind and thought of the Son, until the anointing? Are we not rather to believe that it was only the *fulness of measure* that was conferred at the anointing? If the latter, then we may be able to find scope for certain testimonies which otherwise might have to be excluded. 'The child grew, waxed strong in Spirit, filled with wisdom.' Another Scripture says, '*there is a spirit in man:*' this we know is 'the spirit of the world,' which inclines the thoughts towards the things of the world. 'The Spirit which is of God' directed the thoughts and mind of Christ towards the things of God, endowed him with wisdom beyond his years, prompted attention towards the Father's business and gave him understanding concerning it which astonished all who heard him. This manifestation of Deity in him was 'mental and moral.' His mind and thoughts tended heavenward, because the 'Spirit of wisdom and understanding rested upon him.' Thus the spirit of his mind was pure and holy. Innocence characterised him, as the Lamb without blemish.

The Deity, as exhibited in the mental and moral characteristics of the Son, can be traced only in a limited degree of manifestation, in the stages of youth and early manhood. We see in this the gradual unfolding of the beauties of 'the Plant;' not an instantaneous or meteor-like development.

In the revelation unto Moses of the name of Yahweh, we see how limited was the first exhibition simply, 'He who shall be.'

The second was fuller and more comprehensive, proclaiming the moral attributes of Jehovah: 'Gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth,' &c. Then there was a manifestation of the *glory*. Afterwards, the word or law went forth to the children of Israel.

The Mosaic pattern of heavenly things exhibits the order and system according to which Jehovah manifests Himself. Everything has its order and system of development. We must observe times and seasons in this manifestation of Deity.

The real name-bearer of Jehovah, in the time appointed, appeared in the person of Jesus. The manifestation of the Father in and through him was according to the Mosaic pattern: first, his name and existence; afterwards, the development of moral attributes; then the giving of the Word to Israel, with power and miracles; and finally, the manifestation of His glory to certain witnesses. These things, however, were not exhibited all of a sudden; like a shooting star, or a meteoric shower.

When our minds become deeply impressed with the grandeur of this subject, we shall cease defining it in terms of human wisdom; but grouping all the testimonies pertaining to it, combining their separate relations, and arranging them in harmonious combination according to their proper relations and positions, we shall see the grandeur of the subject, and be content to contemplate, wonder and adore.

Let us bear in mind the greatness of the subject before us, the manifestation of Deity in flesh. It is the 'great mystery of godliness,' which we have the privilege of looking into. Let us, then, approach it with reverence; free from cramping imitations, and mathematical lines, which tend to confuse and perplex, instead of to enlighten and build up.