

THE SCHOOLMASTER

WHEN Israel came out of Egypt, and God adopted him as His first-born son and heir, it was the most reasonable thing in the world that the education of the son should be the Father's first care. It was of the highest importance that the son should have a course of training suitable to the position he should ultimately occupy—of representing the Father and ruling for Him as “a kingdom of priests.” God's design with His son is, as we know, to pass over to him the possession of the earth and make him His representative in the government of the world—in short, to make him a manifestation of Himself. For this end he had to be equipped, and a schoolmaster was the Father's immediate consideration.

For a nation to be mentally and morally fitted to be the likeness of the Creator of the Universe, and to occupy for Him the seat of government must appeal to us all as a stupendous task. Paul, in referring to Israel's career, says the law was his schoolmaster to bring him to Christ, and that Israel, like heirs in general, differed nothing from a servant, but was under tutors and governors. The effective education of an heir necessitates an accurate knowledge of things as they are, and not as they may seem to be. There should be a thorough comprehension of the origin and meaning of matters as they exist. He should be informed of the root of the affairs with which he will ultimately have to deal, so that he may discriminate between the false and the true, and be able to see clearly and act unerringly. In fact he ought to be instructed in the widest sense in *that which is*. So far as this education is carried out, so far is the happy and privileged scholar instructed in truth, an education which, with beautiful emphasis, is in Bible phrase termed The Truth.

Where shall we look among men for wisdom that could mould a man, to say nothing of a nation, into such moral and intellectual shape? In the affairs of men, when a training for law or government in any of its branches is desired, the pupil is placed under tuition that will touch just that particular department of learning. Of course every law is a schoolmaster in its way. It brings its scholars to a knowledge of its own intricacies, and in proportion to the study of those intricacies, it fits a man to be the dispenser of law, but there the matter ends. There is no teaching outside its own domain. As regards God's training for government administration which He purposes to entrust to His son, the education needed to be much deeper and wider in its bearings. We do not expect to find an educational primer on first principles of morality in the statute book of any constitution. Gentile law is protective in its aim, and, although it is of the most complex character, a study of it will never touch the heart in any moral sense. It exhibits its penalties and sets forth its standard of right and wrong without touching the conscience. But law and government surely require a knowledge of human nature. Where, then, is there a law among nations that professes to teach its scholars the nature of the heart in its various workings? And yet we can discern that if a law giver is to have an effective education it is of the first consequence that he should be trained in the knowledge of the mental and moral constitution of man. Perhaps, though, it would be impossible to teach human nature what it is by rote, so as to make the teaching corrective. Its principles are too profound and recondite for mere verbal instruction. There must be some sort of practical teaching, and it is here that we see the supreme wisdom of God in His choice of a schoolmaster for His son.

He formulated a law—a process of education that should enter the very core of human existence, touch every-day life, correct public and private misdemeanours of all sorts, and induce a moral drift of character that could never be ensured by intellectual effort. It was a wonderful conception that elected to make a national law the channel of the most perfect education the world has ever seen, not by the mere study of it, but by practically expounding it in the daily attention to its mandates. The divine law given by Moses, as a schoolmaster, was a most comprehensive object lesson in symbol on the nature of man and the character of God. The adopted son has not been brought into his favoured position as a reward of any merit of his, but that he might be developed into a mental and moral portrait of the Father for the Father's own glory, and to hold for Him the reins of government. What a change from benighted, foolish, self-loving natural Israel to the righteous, beneficent, intellectual kingdom of priests, shining forth with the glory Christ in the Father's kingdom! And yet this was the result aimed at by the law, a law that shall accomplish that whereunto it was appointed, through the obedience of Christ, in whom an Israel of God shall yet shine forth as a first-born son. But this school-master—what a deluge of blood-shedding, year in and year out, was the school-master. What washings, what offerings, what stringent enactments and prohibitions! Altar of brass, altar of gold, tabernacle, holy, and most holy places, bullocks, goats, lambs, birds, first fruits, offerings. Day and night burning of animal life, burning on the altar, burning without the camp. Death, death everywhere; What was the meaning of it all? "The schoolmaster" absorbed the whole attention of His scholar. It was the business of Israel to learn. What was the lesson? Sin and its penalty. Just think of a law designed to teach the nation its natural depravity and the abhorrence of the king towards it! Death stamped the whole fabric of the constitution! It was a nation of death because of sin, and was taught that, as sin is incurable, nothing but death awaits it. Look, then, at the picture of the school-master. Israel, God's son, symbolically dying unto sin through the course of ages. God's holiness and man's guilt recognised through this medium. That the wages of sin is death was a fact daily before the eyes of the nation. No pains were spared to inculcate humility as the proper attitude of a sinning son towards a holy Father. Submission and separateness to God was the essence of the law. The rights of men found no place in the divine economy of Israel, for they had none in relation to their king. The schoolmaster was not a system to occupy the occasional attention of Israel, but was so framed as to engross their whole time. Symbolically they "died daily" and yet lived. There was no life outside the schoolmaster. They were cut off. In allegiance to the law, Israel died and yet lived.

There is, however, another side. "The gift of God is eternal life." This was a principle as much foreshadowed as "The wages of sin is death." For example see the sacrifices. "If any man bring an offering . . . he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering and it shall be accepted for him to make an atonement, and he shall kill the bullock before the Lord" (Lev. 1). Do we not see mercy here? Atonement, forgiveness, man placing his hand on the head of the animal, identified himself with the sacrifice, and he and the animal stood as *one* life, slain life. The life was consumed upon the altar, and the sinner stood before God delivered and forgiven. Then look at the tabernacle and all its appurtenances which stood for the uncleanness of Israel (Lev. 16). Everything was blood-sprinkled or exhibited as dying—shedding blood as the penalty of sin. Israel, by identification with the tabernacle arrangements, died representatively, and, having symbolically paid the penalty, was reconciled to God. The altar, which was the nucleus of

the whole system, pre-eminently stood representative of the uncleanness of Israel. It was an apparatus for consuming animal life.

Now see how the law was a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Christ. The altar was an apparatus for consuming animal life. Christ was a “body prepared” for destroying sin nature. The tabernacle and its furniture was blood sprinkled in token of cleaning from defilement. Christ, by the blood of the new covenant, cleansed himself. The morning and evening lamb of the burnt offering was a daily consumption of life. God’s lamb, through the eternal spirit, offered himself, dying daily into sin. And so on through the entire system. It all leads to Christ. The lesson of the law can be reduced to a very simple proposition: *Submission to God as the way of life*. Israel, as a nation, missed the lesson, and saw only the letter of the law without perceiving its meaning, but Christ learned it and exemplified it, and in him we learn what submission means and what the destruction of sin is. The tuition of the law is the same now, only we stand on a higher level in seeing how sin-nature was destroyed by Christ. The form is altered, that is all: the principle remains, only instead of identification with animal sacrifice for forgiveness of any one sin, it is now a mental and moral fusion with the character of Christ for forgiveness of all sins. We stand with him a sacrifice for sin, in him we die daily, and with him we stand as *one* life. The whole business of Israel now, as ever, is the service of God and submission to Him. In Christ we are God’s Israel, his first-born son, heir of the world, and being educated by the school-master in those things exemplified by Christ, we have learned what is truth, and are fitted to become “a kingdom of priests.”

MARY G. BRABYN.