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CONVERSION

What do we mean by the word, how does the dictionary define it? It simply says - "To change" or "the act of changing". Its Biblical meaning is precisely the same for we read of "being renewed", "to be transformed", "to be created anew", "to be born again", these are scriptural expressions to define the conversion of the sinner, and this change must be wrought in the heart of every man if he is ever to know, or enter into the presence of God. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3.v.3.) "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18.v.3.) Hence the Holy Spirit goes on to say "Repent ye therefore and BE CONVERTED (Acts 3.v 19) It is the plain truth of the word of God that man has to be changed.

The damnable theory of evolution invented by the devil and taught by man undermines this fundamental truth. It is not foolish enough to say that there is nothing wrong with man for his actions would soon prove that this is not the case, indeed such would freely admit that man does not live the kind of life he should, nevertheless man is evolving, and little by little very slowly and gradually is growing up; the varying phases of each generation although perhaps not understood, nevertheless make their contribution in this process, and looking back over the "millions"? of years, - see the progress! From the lower forms of life, to animal, to human, first primitive then civilized, and now the highly educated technical society of the twentieth century, and still man advances! All this may sound very feasible to the natural man, but the fact that he is so gullible to such a theory only proves to the hilt his natural condition. "His ears are dull of hearing", "His eyes are blind", "His mind is darkened" - He believes the lie, He has no spiritual discernment, for spiritually he is dead. The question of scientific advancement no one will deny, but this will never give man spiritual life, neither will it change the heart of man "Which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17.v.9) When the Holy Spirit quickens a man he will be born again, and this time born not of man, in sin and blind to truth, but born of the Spirit of God with eyes enlightened so that he sees the REAL PICTURE, minds renewed in knowledge after the image of HIM who created us (Col 3.v.10) so that we can comprehend and understand what is the truth about these things. This is something which the unconverted cannot talk about, indeed they are not qualified to argue over, for it is outside of their range, they are not

only ignorant of the facts but they are devoid of the ability to comprehend spiritual truth.

This is why the Scriptures emphatically state that man MUST be converted, he MUST be changed, and when he has been, he will see at once that this process of evolving is a gigantic delusion, he will immediately see man's noble and exalted position and condition at creation, but which through sin he lost, and far from advancing every member of the human race is born in sin facing away from God and true blessing, all treading a DOWNWARD course and heading for disaster and that eternal and irrevocable.

Now apart from a change which man cannot himself achieve or bring about, he will never see the kingdom of God. He sees all things pertaining to the kingdom of which he forms a part, he can intelligently enter into all that which pertains to this life and the natural man, he may be a valuable person in the community, but the Bible says that his domain is "The kingdom of darkness". He doesn't see the kingdom of God or anything that pertains to it, but when conversion takes place such a person is "Translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Dear Son (COL.1 v.13.) Here in HIS LIGHT, we see LIGHT." (PS.36.v.9.) and what a revelation it all is, "Old things pass away, behold all things become new". (2.COR.5.V 17).

The enquirer may well ask, how can all this come about? Again let it be stated that man cannot effect this. "Salvation is of the Lord" (JONAH 2.V.9) God alone in the Trinity of His being effects it. In our natural state we have no fear of God, no love for Christ, no faith to believe, and a mind at enmity with God, but at conversion (The act of being changed) God the Holy Spirit quickens the dead soul which then springs to spiritual life, with a mind renewed so that enmity is overcome, or rather forever removed, furthermore the understanding previously darkened (EPH.4 v.18) suddenly becomes enlightened (EPH 1.v.18) and for the first time, that person finds himself in agreement with God and with His Word, he accepts what it says, agrees with God against himself, and finds himself believing the "Record of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ", this is faith, Biblical faith, saving faith, but ALL wrought of God, Just as the individual had no part in his natural birth, so in new birth, for new birth is a spiritual resurrection, it is "A passing from death unto life" (JOHN 5-V.24.) and resurrection is altogether out of man's province, it can only be brought about, by Deity, and through the grace of our Sovereign God

this work of conversion has been wrought in the hearts of countless numbers down the stream of history, "By grace men and women have been saved, through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God" (EPH.2.V.8.) Vast multitudes of mankind have experienced this change "they once were far off but have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ". (EPH.2.V.13) and these last words give us the basis upon which this change is effected, - "THE BLOOD OF CHRIST", man's alienation from God and his spiritual death is all on account of sin, and reconciliation and raising to new life could only be brought about by effectually dealing with the sin of the person so converted. This God did when at Calvary He imputed to Christ the sins of His people - they were charged to the account of the Saviour and He went into death, not because of sin in Him for He was SINLESS but because "He was made sin for us". (2 Cor.5.v.21.) "He bore our sin in His own body on the tree" (1.PET.2.V.24.) These sins "He put away by the sacrifice of HIMSELF" (HEB.9 v.26.) All the sins of every believing soul were atoned for at Calvary.

The wrath of a Holy God was unleashed against His Own Son, when "He died the Just for we the unjust that He might bring us to God. (1.PET.3-v.18.)

This was the reason why Paul could preach with such confidence and authority when at Antioch he declared "Be it known unto you that through this man (The Lord Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things (ACTS.13-v.38-39)

Here is the means whereby the great change of conversion is brought about. From first to last it is the work of God Himself, man cannot revive or resurrect himself, he is dead in sins,

"Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,
To sanctify the soul
To pour fresh life in every part,
And new create the whole".

The conversion of a sinner necessitates "The exceeding greatness of His power to us ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. (EPH.1 v.19-20).

W.H.M.

ARMINIANISM - CALVINISM

There are many Christians today who have been brought up in the traditions of the evangelicalism of the past 100-150 years who now find themselves somewhat puzzled and bewildered as they hear terms such as Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Calvinism, that it is probably necessary to clarify in simple language what lies behind these things.

For the purpose of this short article we will just take the question of Arminianism and Calvinism, for Arminianism is but the more modern version of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.

The Arminian line of teaching set out by James Arminius a Dutch professor in the early 17th century is:

1. Man is fallen, yet the effects of the fall do not render him incapable of choosing spiritual good. He is not so completely corrupted by sin but what he can savingly believe the gospel if it is put to him. He can of his own will exercise faith and choose salvation and thus bring himself into all the blessings of the gospel.
2. God elected those who He foresaw would respond to the gospel, ones He knew, who, of their own free will would want to be saved.
3. Universal redemption, or a general atonement. The death of Christ creates the possibility of any man to be saved if he chooses to believe. There is the potential of salvation but it is dependent upon man's will to receive it.
4. Man is never so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject. In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is restricted by the human will. Spiritual life can only be imparted subject to the will of man.
5. It rests with the believer to maintain his faith in order to prevent himself finally falling from grace.

To go into these vital matters a synod was convened in 1618 to meet in Dort. The great theologians of that day sat for 154 sessions over a period of many months, prayerfully searching the scriptures and could find no true Biblical ground for these things, indeed it was but a revival of semi-Pelagianism, at that synod the warriors of the faith re-affirmed the position of the Reformers that "GOD IS SOVEREIGN". Five points were formulated to counter the Arminian line of teaching, they became known as the five points of Calvinism and stem from the principle that "Salvation is of the Lord".

These points are:-

1. Total depravity That man's fall in Eden was total, when he sinned he died, and spiritual death has passed upon all men. Fallen man therefore has no more power of his own will to believe the gospel and receive salvation than he has to keep the law.
2. Unconditional election That God of His own sovereign will made choice of an innumerable company of sinners to be redeemed by Christ, who would be given faith and brought to glory.
3. Particular Redemption That the goal of the work of Christ was, the redemption of the elect, and that atonement was absolute for that number and not a remedy for sin on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.
4. Irresistible Grace That when the Holy Spirit seizes upon a man to work a work of grace He never fails, is never frustrated or defeated. The elect are ALL effectually called.
5. Perseverance of the Saints That believers are kept in faith and grace by the power of God until they are received into glory. The hallmark of man's salvation being that he perseveres in the things of God and so gives diligence to make his calling and election sure.

These points are in essence the two lines of teaching. Some Christians have endeavoured to mix these things, holding to the first points of Arminianism but substituting eternal security in place of the fifth point, but when scrutinized carefully to be even logical the five points of Arminianism must stand together. When analysed theologically and doctrinally in a thorough manner, Arminianism is VERY FAR from the truth of Holy Scripture. If considered prayerfully and carefully we see these two lines well-nigh opposing each other, it is not a question of emphasis but of content. One sets forth a God who saves, the other a God who enables man to save himself. One makes salvation actual, the other makes salvation possible. One states that the work of salvation depends upon God exclusively, the other that in the final analysis it is dependent upon the will of man. One regards faith as being bound up with, and part of God's gift of salvation, the other, that faith is of man and he has to exercise this in order to get salvation.

The Arminian says "I owe my election to my faith". The Calvinist says "I owe my faith to my election". The Arminian would say "I could not have obtained my salvation without Calvary" whilst the Calvinist says "The Lord Jesus obtained

Salvation for me at Calvary". The differences are legion and in almost every instance, Arminianism will be found to be a REVERSAL OF TRUTH. But some argue, Calvinism makes preaching the gospel meaningless, but the truth is that Arminianism makes preaching the gospel unnecessary. for if Christ bore the sins of the whole race. and full atonement was made by Him and accepted by God then all the world IS SAVED (for Calvary was a finished work) an Arminian if logical must be a Universalist. But NO!

God has His election of grace. that vast number out of every nation under heaven. they have been redeemed and will be effectually called. and the God who ordained the end of their salvation has also ordained the means of their salvation. that is. that the gospel shall be preached amongst all nations in order that that vast number shall be reached. as the gospel is preached so the Holy Spirit calls "God's elect" and so the eternal purpose is accomplished.

It is that which is called "Calvinism" which alone makes sense. The Calvinist does not preach and urge decisions of man's will, for he knows that the choice is God's, not man's. Rather does he declare the truth and apply it to the sinner. leaving to the Holy Spirit who is sovereign to effectually call all that the Father has given to Christ.

One if honest is bound to agree with Spurgeon when he said "There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him Crucified unless we preach what is nowadays called "Calvinism", it is a nick-name to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the gospel and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel unless we preach the sovereignty of God in his dispensation of Grace; nor unless we exalt the electing. unchangeable. eternal. immutable. conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the Cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called". (SPURGEON'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY VOL 1 CH 16. P. 172).

The slide towards Arminianism was great in Spurgeon's day. but what an avalanche has followed since.

Today we see a return to truth as the Holy Spirit has been at work in the hearts of believers. it may be only a little cloud as big as a man's hand. but small companies here and there have come to see afresh "The Sovereignty of God" and "The Doctrines of Grace". Such are still today tagged

"Calvinist". let us not be concerned. but walking humbly with our God press on in the path of Holiness, "earnestly-contending for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints". (JUDE 3.)

W.H.M.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION

It is with thankfulness and praise that we look back over the past quarter, for the sense of the Lord's presence with us and for the faithful, ministry of His Word. During this period too it has been such a joy and encouragement to have a number of visitors each week from different parts of the country sharing in the things of the Lord.

The week which the friends from the Metropolitan Tabernacle spent with us was particularly happy, we hope D.V. they will visit Bideford again.

At the "Drive-in" Church we have been conscious that the Word has been preached with power, we are humbled before our God that He has entrusted us with such a ministry as this and it has been a heartening sight to see the fellowship rallying to the post of duty each Sunday night, let us pray unceasingly for the messages given and the scope of Divine Truth that has been covered, which has fallen upon the ears of hundreds of men and women again this season. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither but watereth the earth., and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it". (IS. 55.V.10-11.)

It was a very great encouragement to us to meet a lady who was brought into the blessing of God's salvation last year as the result of the preaching at the "Drive-in" Church. She is now Baptised and in Church fellowship in the South of England.

This, the last quarter of the year brings the annual visit of the Deputation Secretary of the T.B.S. always an instructive and highly profitable occasion and one which also affords us the opportunity of practical fellowship as we at North Road give financial support to a society which without compromise stands for the purity of the Holy Scriptures. Mr Dix will also be speaking on the Friday evening, and morning and evening on the Sunday.

The ministry on "The Doctrine of the Church", will continue on Sunday mornings and it will probably take the whole of this quarter to complete this series, much thought and prayer has been given to future subjects, and it is now felt by the elders that we might take as our next study: "The Life of David".

Thursday 17th November is our Annual Church meeting when it is hoped that every member physically able will be present, this meeting is at 6.30 p.m. To our members unable to be with us, some who have been confined to their homes for a long time now, we send our love, and assure you yet again of our constant prayers.

Amusement has become a recognised weapon in the warfare of the Church ... There has been a steady "down grade". From speaking out as the Puritans did, the Church has gradually toned down her testimony; then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she has tolerated them in her borders, and now she has adopted them and provided a home for them under a plea of "reaching the masses, and getting the ear of the people".

The devil has seldom done a cleverer thine than hinting to the Church of Christ that part of her mission is to provide entertainment for the people with a view to winning them into her ranks".

ARCHIBALD G. BROWN

A CHRISTIAN GAINS BY HIS LOSSES
DEATH CAME IN BY SIN, AND SIN GOES OUT BY DEATH.
THE DEPTHS OF MAN'S MISERY ARE NOT SO DEEP AS THE DEPTH OF
GOD'S MERCY.
HE NEVER WAS AS GOOD AS HE SHOULD BE, THAT DOTHS NOT STRIVE TO
BE BETTER THAN HE IS.

RALPH VENNING. 1620-73.

THE SPIRIT FINDS SINNERS IN SUCH A HELPLESS CONDITION,
THAT THEY ARE AS UNABLE TO REPENT OR BELIEVE, AS THEY ARE TO
PURCHASE SALVATION.

WILLIAM GURNALL 1617-1679.