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The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 12

“And thou shalt make curtains of goats’ hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams’ skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers’ skins.” (Exodus 26:7-14)

The covering of the tabernacle consisted of multiple layers of material. The innermost one was fashioned from fine linen, with a pattern of cherubims in blue, purple and scarlet. The next layer, working outwards, is described in Scripture as a **curtain of goats’ hair**. An important distinction is made between the inner curtain – which is consistently called the ‘Tabernacle’ (cf Exodus 26:1, 6) – and this outer covering, which is styled as the ‘Tent’ (cf Exodus 26:11, 12, 13). The same difference in terminology is maintained in the book of Numbers: *“And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation”* (Numbers 3:25). Although these two articles covered the same structure, they

are to be contemplated separately, because the typology of them is different in nature. The inward Tabernacle, its design visible only from within, refers to the dwelling place of Jehovah. The external coverings, which could be seen from outside were regarded as the Tent or Meeting Place of His people. This Holy Structure was a place **visited** by the Hebrews, but God Himself **remained** there, in the cloud of glory upon the Mercy Seat, in the Most Holy Place.

Exodus 26:7-8 gives the dimensions of the goats' hair 'curtains'. Comparison with verses 2-3 shows it to have been somewhat larger than the woven linen tabernacle which it covered. The goats' hair panels were of the same breadth (four cubits), but were all two cubits longer, at 30 cubits each. And there were eleven of them, sewn together as a set of five, and a set of six. The two resulting sheets (measuring approximately 45ft x 30ft and 45ft x 36ft) could be joined together by corresponding rows of fifty loops on one, and fifty brass 'taches' (or hooks) on the other. The bigger size of the goat's hair covering meant that it would reach to the ground on either side of the Tabernacle, with sufficient material to be 'doubled back' on itself by four cubits at the Eastern end.

The choice of material is significant, for the goat was primarily the animal used for 'sin offerings'. Under the Ceremonial Law of the Old Testament era, the Jews observed certain great Feasts, upon which they would assemble together and be collectively represented before God. On many of these occasions, a goat would be used as a sacrifice for sin. Israel's year commenced with the **Passover**, during which seven-day event various sacrifices were made: two young bullocks, one ram and seven lambs, "*And one goat for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you*" (Numbers 28:22).

The same was true of the **Feast of Weeks** (or, Pentecost): "*Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering*" (Leviticus 23:19); and

at the **Feast of Trumpets**: “*And one kid of the goats for a sin offering to make an atonement for you*” (Numbers 29:5). Next, on the **Annual Day of Atonement**, a special sin offering was made of two goats. One would be slain, while the other, having had the sins of the people confessed upon it, was led out into a ‘land not inhabited’ to perish in the wilderness. Leviticus chapter 16 gives the detail concerning this. Finally in the calendar of observances came the **Feast of Tabernacles** which lasted for eight days, upon each of which a goat was to be sacrificed for a sin offering (cf Numbers 29:16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34 and 38).

In addition to these special convocations, the goat is also the prominent animal on extraordinary occasions when a sin offering was required, namely: For the sins of a **ruler**, “*When a ruler hath sinned and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty; Or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish*” (Leviticus 4:22-23); for the sins of a **common person**, “*And if any one of the common people sin ... then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned*” (Leviticus 4:27-8); for the sins of the **priests** at their consecration, “*And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin offering*” (Leviticus 9:3); for the sins of **princes** at the dedication of the altar: “*And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar... One kid of the goats for a sin offering*” (Numbers 7:10, 16); for all **sins of ignorance**, “*And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering*” (Numbers 15:27). To complete the list, there was also a **monthly** sin offering made: “*this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the Lord shall be offered*” (Numbers 28:14-15).

There is a reason for giving this extensive list of references. On every occasion that a sin offering was required, there must be a goat sacrificed. And in total, under the Levitical system there were **five** established festivals and **six** additional occasions on which such a sacrifice was to be made – eleven in total. Surely it is more than mere coincidence that these numbers should tally so precisely with the goats' hair curtains of the Tabernacle.

A further examination of Scripture will evidence that the goat invariably has evil connotations and associations. For example, Rebekah placed goats' skins over the hands of Jacob in order to deceive Isaac (cf Genesis 27:6-29). A generation later, Joseph's brethren killed a goat in order to stain with its blood his famous coat, and thereby deceive their father (cf Genesis 37:31-36). In the language of the New Testament, God's chosen, redeemed people are likened unto sheep, whereas unregenerate sinners are described as goats (cf Matthew 25:32-33). In all this, the goat is seen as being definitely associated with sin. This gives a clue to that which is pre-figured by the second covering.

The Tabernacle, as previous studies have established, all points towards Christ, and these goats' hair curtains are no exception. For they depict the Lord Jesus as the great sin offering, for the iniquities of all His people. He who knew no sin was made sin for us (cf 2 Corinthians 5:21). Of old did the prophet announce: "*Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin*" (Isaiah 53:10).

The glorious multi-coloured curtains which formed the ceiling of the Tabernacle were entirely contained and concealed by this covering of goats' hair, and thus could only be observed by those on the inside. Similarly, not until a person has seen Christ to be their sin offering will they ever understand the glory of His perfections, or enjoy the hallowed atmosphere of His presence.

Recall how that, owing to its size, the goats' hair covering was doubled back at the end corresponding to the "*forefront*", or entrance, of the Tabernacle. This is highly suggestive. A worshipper or priest would thereby be reminded as he entered of the tremendous cost paid by another to procure for him an entrance. By doubling the thickness God as it were **reinforces** the truth of the sin offering, so that all might be made aware, in no uncertain terms, that access to God is by the blood of a sacrifice – namely Jesus Christ – and no other.

Now to those taches of brass. The inner linen curtains were coupled together with gold connectors, while the goats' hair ones had brass. This is an important detail. The fabric foreshadows Christ as being made sin for His people, and brass is often a symbol of Divine judgment. Upon the cross of Calvary, Jehovah put Him to grief (cf Isaiah 53:10); the wrath of God due to the sinner broke upon Christ; the sword of Holy Justice smote Him, and He endured the sinner's Hell. Christ is the sin offering, and the substitute.

Indeed, it was only by virtue of the curtains of goats' hair covering the whole that God could manifest His glory there. He displays the wonders of His grace from beneath, or within, that screen. Observe the Divine order in these things. Speaking from the covered Tabernacle, God could say: "*He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel*" (Numbers 23:21). That covering, typifying a sacrifice made for sin, enabled God to dwell in the midst of a sinful people; acted as a shield between His Holiness and their iniquity; allowed Him to be simultaneously both 'just, and the justifier' of them (cf Romans 3:26). Beneath that canopy, He could display His glory, and sinners could draw near to worship.

There were still two more coverings overlaying the goats skins, briefly described: "*And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of **rams' skins dyed red**, and a covering above of **badgers' skins***" (Exodus 26:14). No

measurements are given for these, but it is reasonable to assume that they were larger again, so as to provide protection for the whole of the Tabernacle, when pitched. This arrangement of coverings meant that ordinarily, only that of badgers' skins would have been visible to an observer standing without. The rest were all concealed.

Consider the symbolism here. These outer coverings give a two-fold view of Christ in His mediatorial work. First – how He appeared in the sight of God, and second, how He appeared in the eyes of men. The rams' skins present the God-ward aspect. In Exodus 29 much detail is given concerning the consecration of the priests, and the separating of them unto the service of God. Devotion to God is the theme of the chapter, and the way in which they were 'hallowed' to minister unto the Lord. Central to that ceremony was the offering of a ram, an animal significant for being the 'head' of the flock. The Son of God came into this world, becoming incarnate, and was made in the likeness of men. He is the Head of His people, the sheep. His supreme mission was to do the will of God, namely, fulfil the eternal counsel and effect the redemption of the elect. To this was He ever devoted.

As a child He could say: "*wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49). Again: "*I must work the works of Him that sent Me*" (John 9:4). This utter devotion to the Father's will was manifested in His 'obedience unto death, even the death of the cross' (cf Philippians 2:8). This gives the interpretation of the rams' skins dyed red. Christ not only lived in obedience to God, but His death also was an act of obedience to the Father (cf John 10:18). At Calvary, men saw little more than the execution of a man condemned as a criminal, but God looked upon it as an act of unreserved conformity to His will, and absolute devotion to the Covenant.

However, over the red rams' skins was the outermost covering, of a much humbler material, namely badgers' skins. As Israel wandered

through the wilderness, constantly pitching their camp in the midst of different heathen races, all the local people saw of the Tabernacle was this strange tent of badgers' skins. This is how Christ has ever appeared to the natural man. For He made Himself of no reputation (cf Philippians 2:7); He was born in the meanest of circumstances; His cradle was a manger; He laboured as a carpenter; while the people derisively asked of Him, 'can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (cf John 1:46) Many were 'astoni[sh]ed' at Him (cf Isaiah 52:14) – that is to say, 'bewildered'; the masses did not know what to think – so in the main, He was dismissed. *“He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men”* (Isaiah 53:2-3).

Why was this so? Simply because the natural man sees nothing but the 'badgers' skins'. They cannot see those rams' skins dyed red – the wondrous cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ – and as for the depth of meaning of atonement, and Christ being 'made sin' for the sinner, this is something of which they know nothing. Speak to a worldly observer of the covering of goats' hair, and he will say, 'No! There is no such thing. That tent is made of badgers' skins. That is all I can see, therefore that is all I will believe'. To try and explain the wonders of the inner sanctuary, and the glories of the curtain of fine linen with its blue, purple and scarlet, is to speak in a foreign language. For, *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). *“But [says Christ to His own] blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Matthew 13:16-17). May this teaching be of help and profit to all who read.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

“The coverings have a voice. Spirit of Truth, speak by them to our hearts. The first has no inviting look. Its colour shines not. Its texture is uncouth. Thus to the worlding, Jesus shows no charms. The eye which seeks some tinsel-glitter will turn away in scorn. But there is folly and much peril here. Offence at the meek Saviour’s lowly guise may be a rapid downfall into Hell’s worst depths.”

Henry Law (1797 – 1884)

“These several coverings of the Tabernacle show the care that God takes of His church and people, and how sufficiently they are provided for, that they may be in safety from all their enemies, being clothed with Christ’s righteousness, and under the [scarlet] covering of His blood, and surrounded by His almighty power. *“And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain”* (Isaiah 4:5-6).

John Gill (1697 – 1771)

“Our first parents, who were naked, were clothed at the expense of life. Beasts were slain, and resigned up their lives a sacrifice to God, to afford clothing to them to cover their nakedness. So doth Christ, to afford clothing to our naked souls. The skin signifies the life, *“Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life”* (Job 2:4); i.e. life for life. Thus our first parents were covered with skins of sacrifices, as the Tabernacle in the wilderness, which signified the church, was, when it was covered with rams’ skins dyed red, as though they were dipped in blood, to signify that Christ’s righteousness was wrought out through the pains of death, under which He shed His precious blood.”

Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758)

UNDERCOVER CHURCH

The Tabernacle, as we have already seen, was so valuable that it must be covered. We might be disposed to say, ‘Surely, He who made the elements, He who is the Father of the rain, without whom one drop could not fall upon the earth, without whom not one breath of the rude wind of heaven could disturb the things of this nether world – surely, He might have thrown such a covering of His own unseen power around that Tabernacle, that nothing could ever mar its beauty?’ God did not choose to do this; but He provided for it a covering which was to protect it as it moved from place to place.

I am not going to dwell upon the several particulars of the goats’ hair covering, and the rams’ skins dyed red, and the badgers’ skins; I am merely going to speak of the truths which are here obviously presented to the mind. We have already remarked, the beauty of the tabernacle was to be covered over. The beauty of the Church, brethren, is in the present [time] covered over. This very often staggers the man of the world; but it is just what John tells us, “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2). When the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, he tells them of one who was full of the Holy Ghost – a very useful and very remarkable minister of the Gospel, possessed of very gracious endowments; but he adds, when this individual is among you, his “*bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*” (2 Corinthians 10:10). You perceive the goats’ hair curtain covered over the internal beauty.

But let us say a word as to the estimate that the world forms of the Church of God. You may tell the people of the world of the dignity of the Church of God; you may tell them of the inseparable union

between Christ and His people, that they are actually “*partakers of the Divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4), but yet the Church will be regarded by the people of the world as most contemptible. We are sometimes led astray in this matter; we think the people of the world ought to know more than they do about the people of God. Why, brethren, we have a secret – “*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him*” (Psalm 25:14); and how can we expect the world to understand this secret?

The Church in the present day is covered over, and this is the reason why the time when the Lord shall come and bring His Church with Him is called: “*The manifestation of the sons of God*” (Romans 8:19); when He shall take off the covering, and shall exhibit that beautiful building which He has adorned with so much beauty and glory.

In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle says, “*that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*” (Ephesians 3:10). Well, if it be so, that those bright intelligences even now gaze with wonder upon God’s purposes with regard to His Church, what will it be when both ungodly men, and all the powers of darkness, shall be constrained to say, ‘this is the great day of ‘the manifestation of the sons of God’? In the eighth of Romans, where the Apostle refers to this same glorious period, he tells us, “*the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*” (Romans 8:21-23). Wonderful thought! How one ought to long for the time when the covering will be taken off.

We also notice the plain directions which God gave with regard to the covering of the tabernacle. Cover it, He says, with goats’ skins; cover it

with rams' skins dyed red – a blood-stained covering – cover it with the strong covering of badgers' skins. I need scarcely dwell upon this subject; but I would desire to impress upon your minds the power and strength which are at work for the protection of the Church of God. Oh, what wretched ignorance men betray when they speak of the perseverance of the Church, as if its safety in the smallest degree depended upon itself! The Lord's people are "*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Peter 1:5). When God commanded a covering to be put upon that Tabernacle, it was as if He had said, 'It shall receive no damage – I will keep it; it shall be guarded and protected even unto the end'. Precious thought! Notwithstanding all the storms which beat upon the heads of God's people – notwithstanding all the enmity against them – notwithstanding all the deceitfulness of the fleshly old man, there is a spiritual inner man which God watches over, which He keeps alive; so that nothing shall be able to: "*separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:39).

W. H. Krause (circa 1850)

"The coarser curtains completely covered, and concealed, the richer: yet a two-fold security against the effects of the weather was added, in the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and that of badgers' skins, which was spread over all the rest. The whole represents the person and doctrine of Christ, His true church, and all heavenly things, which are outwardly, and to the carnal eye, mean; but are inwardly, and in the sight of God, exceedingly glorious and precious. The secure protection which He prepares for those who are precious in His sight, may also be denoted: and the unity of the whole, formed of so many pieces and of such different materials, into one covering of the sanctuary, represents the spiritual temple, formed of persons of different nations, dispositions, abilities, and attainments, compacted together into one church, by the willing influence of the Spirit of love."

Thomas Scott (1747 – 1821)

GLORIOUS CONCEALMENT

It is an act of greatest grace in God to cover our transgressions by a pardon. He never shows Himself more as God, than when He thus hides the sin of man. And 'tis an act most opposite to grace for man to cover his sins by denying or excusing it; man never shows himself more a man – a sinful man – than when he covers his own sin. That act of divine pardoning grace David expresseth in [this] language: “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*” (Psalm 32:1). By whom covered? Not by himself, but by God. That which is called the forgiveness of sin in the former part of the verse, is called covering of it in the latter part. Solomon speaks the same thing of God, though he useth another word: “*It is the glory of God to conceal [or cover] a thing*” (Proverbs 25:2); he means a sinful thing. To clear this a little further, we read in Scripture of a four-fold covering of sin for good.

First, there is a covering of sin, **by mercy or free love**; that indeed is the fountain from which transcendent favour, the forgiveness of sin floweth to us. “*I, even I, am He [saith the Lord] that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*” (Isaiah 43:25). That is, ‘the rise and first moving cause of this is in Myself, it proceeds out of My own bosom’. There is no moving cause antecedent to the love of God, why sinners are pardoned...

Secondly, sin is covered ... **by the righteousness of Jesus Christ**. God covers sin from His justice, yet He will suffer no damage in point of justice; though He stop the proceedings of justice, He looseth nothing by it; because sin is covered by His own mercy, [and] by the meritorious obedience of Christ, which gives full satisfaction to all the demands of justice. The mercy seat or propitiatory (which was an illustrious type of Christ) covered the Ark in which the Law was kept (cf Exodus 25:10,17). This mercy seat was of the same length and

breadth with the Ark. And Moses was commanded to put the mercy seat upon the Ark, implying that all our transgressions of the law of God are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is both our propitiatory (cf Romans 3:25) and our propitiation (cf 1 John 2:2). That is, who by the sacrifice of Himself hath made our atonement or agreement with God, which was prefigured by the propitiatory or mercy seat, covering all those transgressions with which we were in any way chargeable by the Law.

Thirdly, sins are covered ... **by the charity of man**. Thus any godly man may and ought to cover the sin of his brother: “*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins*” (1 Peter 4:8). True charity hath a garment long and large enough to cover many, yea a multitude, of sins. Charity cannot cover our own sins as to the justification of our persons before God, ‘tis a garment too thin and too narrow for that purpose, nor was it ever cut out and appointed by God to such a use; but charity should and may cover the sins of others, as to the preservation of their credit among men, and the maintaining of our peace and correspondence with them.

It is dangerous as well as unwarrantable to cover the sins of others by flattery (such a covering of sin is not only an encouragement to sin, but may prove the utter undoing of the sinner). But to cover a sin by charity, that is, while we are admonishing or wisely reproofing a brother ourselves, to conceal it from others, or not to publish and blaze it abroad to his shame, or the provocation of passion in him, is a great piece of Christian duty, and may be a means of recovering him from the power and practice of his sin. Thus Solomon saith: “*Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins*” (Proverbs 10:12); that is, the love of man to man prevents wrath by covering sin for the sinner’s good. Not to cloak and harden him in his sin, but to win him out of it... Love covereth, that is, pardoneth, all the sins of others so far as they concern any injury done to us; thus Christ teacheth us to forgive those that

‘trespass against us’ (cf Matthew 6:12, 15). Yea, love causeth others to forgive us the wrongs which we have done them; whereas hatred (that is, any expression of hatred either by words or actions) doth but stir up strife, and make the breach wider. Hatred always increaseth strife where it is, and often begins it where it is not; love always looks upon great wrongs as small, and upon small ones as none at all.

Fourthly, man also is said in Scripture to cover sin **by the conversion of the sinner**. “*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*” (James 5:19-20). That is, if any one among you who hath made an outward profession of the truth, shall turn aside from the rule of the Gospel, whether in matters of faith or of a holy life, in this case take notice that whosoever shall be blessed as an instrument in God’s hand, by prayer or reproof, by counsels or any endeavours to recover him out of that wandering and backsliding condition, this man shall have the honour (be he whom he will, minister or brother) ... to “*save a soul from death*”, that is, his [brother’s] soul, “*and hide a multitude of sins*”, that is, of his [brother’s] sins. As if he had said, ‘thou shalt be a means of bringing him to a sight of his sin, and so to humble himself before God and seek the pardon of them, which is the only true and happy hiding and covering of them’.

Thus I have shown four coverings of sin, and in all these senses, it is good for us to have our sins covered. Blessed are they whose sins are covered by the free favour of God, by the righteousness of Christ, and by the wise charity of their brethren, either not divulging them, or converting the sinner from them.

Joseph Caryl (1602 – 1673)

EAST OF THE GARDEN

The glorious and God-given light with which the Genesis record begins, has, by the third chapter of the book, been eclipsed by the blackness of sin. In one of the most solemn passages of Scripture it is told how the finest examples of humanity (Adam and Eve), charged with the very least of commandments (a single prohibition) fell into transgression, on the first and only occasion of being tempted. The magnitude of that Fall – from what height to what depth – and the consequences of it, can scarcely be comprehended by mortal minds. Sufficient to know, that by virtue of the ‘original sin’, all things ever to possess life are doomed to die, “*by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*” (Romans 5:12). Moreover, since Adam sinned while standing as representative for all mankind, sin, judgment and condemnation are henceforth imputed to the entire race (cf Romans 5:12-14, 18). Nor is this all; for by that same act the whole creation was unwillingly brought into the ‘bondage of corruption’, therein to languish until the end of time (cf Romans 8:20-23). A day which dawned in the brightness of Paradisial light, sets in the darkness of sin and death and banishment.

Genesis chapter three not only describes the origin of temptation, transgression and death; it also records the first instances of deception, lying, blasphemy, rebellion, unbelief, denial, accusation, and bloodshed. One might expect so tragic a narrative to be unrelieved by any good thing. Yet this is not the case. Even in the midst of this terrible account, deeds of mercy and grace are to be observed on the part of God; acts which have a profound significance and spiritual symbolism. Here, in this ‘book of beginnings’, evidence can be found of revelation, reconciliation and restoration. Here, a pattern is set for the future dealings of God with man; here is truth to which all Adam’s succeeding generations do well to pay heed.

Conscience

In his dreadful deception of the first humans, the Devil asserted that to eat the fruit which God had forbidden would bring about an ‘opening of the eyes’. As is often the case with falsehood, an element of truth was contained in it. No sooner had Adam and Eve transgressed the law than they became at once aware of ‘good’ (which they had utterly failed to perform) and ‘evil’ (which they had proved powerless to resist). The ‘eyes’ with which they now looked upon the world were biased toward sin, and filled with darkness (cf 2 Peter 2:14, Matthew 6:22-23). They saw, but perceived not (cf Isaiah 6:10); and so it would prove to be with all their descendants.

Some comfort is to be gleaned however, from the fact that, *“they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons... and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden”* (Genesis 3:7-8). In the judicial marring of their sight which they had experienced, God did not suffer them to be left entirely devoid of conscience. Their reaction to the original sin was one of primal guilt. How much greater would this tragedy have been, if the Lord had afterward found these two transgressors, lying openly beneath the boughs of the Tree of Knowledge, gorged upon its fruits? Instead, they were caused to feel at once, albeit painfully, guilt and remorse at sin.

In this, the mercy of God is to be seen. Even in their fallen state, they were caused to retain something of the Law written on their hearts, *“their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another”* (Romans 2:15). ‘Conviction’ is often the first place to which God brings a sinner on the route to restoration; and it is a blessing – not a curse – to be made aware that there is no *“creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:13).

Communication

The preceding chapters of Genesis describe the free communion and conversation which Adam enjoyed with God during those early days in Eden (cf Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15-19). This wonderful privilege might well be expected to become a casualty of the Fall. It is evident that Adam imagined, or intended, never to commune with the Lord again, as he fled with his wife from the presence of God. But it is offended Deity who speaks first, in the guilty silence of fallen Eden, calling unto Adam and saying, “*Where art thou?*” (Genesis 3:9). The words are simultaneously an enquiry, a rebuke and a command. They have the same force as the question to Elijah, “*What doest thou here?*” (1 Kings 19:9, 13); or the instruction to, “*return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord*” (Hosea 14:1-2); or the imploration, “*Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause Me to hear it*” (Song of Songs 8:13). It is the gracious call of God.

The history of Divine revelation, the unfolding of truth, the declaration of the mind of God to man, all began in Eden. Within a few verses of the fearful question posed by the Lord, the first prophecy is uttered, sin and Satan are condemned, the Messiah is foretold, and the course of human life and death is dictated. Shortly thereafter, truth would be demonstrated in the typology of sacrifice; within a few years’ time be set forth in the person of Abel; then Enoch, the seventh from Adam, would be raised up to prophesy of the Lord’s coming (cf Jude 14). In all this, God did not deal with fallen mankind as their sin deserved, but continued to speak in unmistakable tones.

Through the pages of Holy Scripture, and the application of the Holy Spirit, He speaks still today. Though no visible manifestation, or bodily presence is afforded, the communication of truth goes on. It is significant that Adam and Eve, in the ‘cool’ of that dreadful day, “*heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden*” (Genesis 3:8, 10); even

as the Apostle John, thousands of years later upon the isle of Patmos describes how, on the Lord's Day, "*I... heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet... And I turned to see the voice that spake with me*" (Revelation 1:10, 12). From the first to the last, it is the voice of God – His Word – which is pre-eminent in His dealings with man, and takes priority over any physical appearance. So in the present time, though no form or similitude is seen, His voice which once shook the earth re-echoes in the pages of the Bible.

Covering

The pangs of conscience which gripped the transgressors in Eden were accompanied by a desire for covering and concealment. They were made conscious of an unworthiness and shame which went far deeper than the flesh of their bodies, and looked for a remedy. The measures which they took were pitiable and futile. The leaves of the plants around them were readily available, easy to obtain, and within their capability to join together into rudimentary clothes. Yet still feeling the inadequacy of these efforts, they sought refuge in the obscuring darkness among the trees. Here is an illustration of fallen human nature, seeking worldly solutions to a spiritual crisis in the soul. Their schemes are superficial, impoverished, worthless, and altogether unavailing – the crudely stitched fig-leaves of self righteousness, and the insufficient shelter of all earthly means. Divine intervention is required for a problem of this magnitude.

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Consider what is contained in the statement of this verse. Before they could be dressed aright, it was first necessary for God to remove that which they had attempted to fashion for themselves, and take the fig-leaves away. Their unacceptable methods of coverage must be thwarted. This Job describes, when he says: "*If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom*" (Job 31:33) – burying sin in the heart behind a veil of secrecy,

or self-justification is no answer. This the Lord takes away, that there might be no man-made 'cloak for sin' (cf John 15:22).

Following this, it is evident that the first deaths in history occurred. For coats of skins to be supplied, animals must be sacrificially slain. "*God will provide Himself a lamb for [an] ... offering*" (Genesis 22:8). The nature of the animal used by the Lord in Eden is not stated, but the vital fact is this: **blood was shed**. "*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22). Here is the distinguishing feature, which sets these coats of skins apart from the aprons of leaves; and afterward set the offering of Abel apart from the offering of Cain – the life of a victim was given up, to make atonement for sin. Thus God displayed the principle of substitution and sacrifice, and instituted that Old Testament practice which would find its ultimate fulfilment in Christ.

It is also written how that God, having made coats of skins, **clothed** Adam and Eve with them. He arrayed them Himself. How this magnifies the sovereignty of God in rescuing sinful man! Fallen Adam is not heard to cry unto heaven for a covering to be provided. God supplied it, in accordance with the good pleasure of His will. God provided the beasts. God made the coats. God applied them to the needy sinners, and dressed them. Had He not done so, they would have proved as powerless to attire themselves as they had been to make the clothing. No, the whole process, from start to finish, is accomplished through the grace of God alone.

Conclusion

The scene of Genesis chapter three opens in the very midst of the garden of Eden in all the felicity of the first Paradise. It closes at its farthest eastern border with separation and exile. The final sentence pronounced, and judgment executed, is this: "*He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword*

which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24). Adam and Eve were ejected into a hostile and sin-cursed world, there to endure the legacy of the Fall, namely toil, pain and mortality, for the remainder of their finite and limited lives. Meanwhile, the way back into Eden, its blessedness, and their former deathless state was rendered forever impassable.

Even in this, however, the mercy of God is to be seen. *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness”* (Romans 11:22). Great though their punishment was, it served a higher purpose. By it, humanity was taught that ‘Paradise’ was no longer to be looked for upon earth. The dwelling place of God did not consist of a geographical location. They must look for a better country, that is, a heavenly; and a city whose builder and maker is God (cf Hebrews 11:10, 16). Another lesson was this: the route to life and immortality was not to be found by looking back, among the trees of Eden – it now lay ahead – and it was a blood-sprinkled way, characterised by sacrifice, and a God-appointed victim, and a Divinely wrought covering for sin; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. He only is the Lamb of God, by whom sin may be taken away (cf John 1:29, 36); He is the only source of ‘covering’ by which fallen sinners may stand accepted in the sight of God. Thus in the language of Revelation, Christ says, *“I counsel thee to buy of Me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear”* (Revelation 3:18), while the epistles exhort and assure the Christian: *“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 13:14); *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27). He is the only Way to the midst of the Paradise of God (cf Revelation 2:7); and, *“blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”* (Revelation 22:14).

R. J. Steward

EDITORIAL

Throughout history, worldly man has devised numerous and varied means for the covering up of his sins, and silencing the accusations of conscience. Popular among them have been good works, self righteousness, or even a brazen unbelief and denial, and what the Scriptures call a ‘wilful ignorance’. These are their ‘garments’. Amongst those who call themselves ‘Christians’, there are many other ways of covering over sin quickly and easily. ‘Easy believism’ becomes a substitute for a true work of grace, and ‘religious activities’ replace genuine spiritual life. These are the alternative forms of clothing common to parts of the modern Church.

Whilst such options might seem acceptable to human reason, or prove agreeable to the flesh, Scripture speaks of a time when ‘the King will come in to see’ (cf Matthew 22:11). On that day of reckoning, only one great criterion will be applied. Relative merits of different systems will not be considered, only this fundamental question: who is wearing the God-given garment, and who is not? Those who are not, whatever noisy justifications of their chosen ways they may have made in the past, will be rendered speechless when confronted and challenged by the Lord, and shall not answer a word.

But those who by grace are clothed in the robe which God has appointed will find that, though by nature unworthy, they are bidden as guests; though belonging to the ‘highways and byways’ of this world, they are called to the King’s table; they go in with Him to the marriage, and the door is shut for their eternal security (cf Matthew 25:10). For that seamless garment is Christ, and all His perfections. He is their right and title to glory.

“Oh may I then in Him be found;
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.” (Mote)