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THE GOLDEN MEAN.

Arminianism is the golden mean between Antinomianism and Universalism. It attributes all salvation to the free grace of God through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It expresses a strong belief in fore-ordination, to this extent, that the conditions of salvation were eternally decreed. "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." It makes salvation conditional and yet places universal man in a salvable position. Here is universalism to the furthest extent that is consistent with the government of God and the accountability of man. Holding the belief that every man can believe it bases the above doctrines on the declaration, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Is it any wonder that a man strongly prejudiced against Arminianism, should, when zealously advocating those doctrines whose logical conclusion is fatalism, horrified at the discovery, swing back to the opposite extreme of universalism? In the Arminian scheme, it can readily be seen how God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly. All his infinite love can be exercised and yet his justice honored. In either of the other schemes one of these attributes must be sacrificed.

BEREAN NOTES.

A. D. 33. LESSON I. STEPHEN'S DEFENSE. Oct. 1.

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—The Lesson. Acts 7. 1-19.
TUESDAY—Trial of Stephen. Acts 6. 1-15.
WEDNESDAY—The Call of Abraham. Gen. 12. 1-10.
THURSDAY—The Promise to Abraham. Gen. 13. 1-18.
FRIDAY—The Promise Fulfilled. Exod. 3. 1-12.
SATURDAY—Thanksgiving for Mercies. Psa. 105. 1-22.
SUNDAY—The Faith of the Patriarchs. Heb. 11. 8-16.

TOPIC.—In Israel the Hand of God Revealed.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. Rom. 9. 5.

DOCTRINE.—God in human history. Psa. 2; Dan. 2. 21; Rom. 13. 1.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

Our studies on THE EARLY CHURCH closed three months ago with the arraignment of Stephen before the Sanhedrin on a charge of blasphemy. We now take up the narrative again at the point where we left it, and shall give to it three lessons, which will embrace the defense made on the trial and the martyr's glorious death. THE TITLE of the present lesson is Stephen's Defense. Stephen rehearses a few leading facts of the national history, which are summed up in the TOPIC as *In Israel the Hand of God Revealed*. In the OUTLINE we see that God's hand is revealed, 1. IN THE CALL; 2. IN THE COVENANT; and 3. IN THE CARE. THE GOLDEN TEXT speaks of the same Israel. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Note the DOCTRINE, God in human history.

BEREAN NOTES.

From the preceding chapter we learn that the opponents of Stephen, unable to answer his arguments in debate, conspired to crush him. He was arrested on a charge of blasphemy. It was alleged as in the particulars: against Moses, God, the temple, and the law. The testimony of the

witnesses (ver. 14.) discloses the sentiments which Stephen had advanced, and shows what the real dispute was about. On one side it was held that the Jewish religion, the worship of the temple, and the rites of the law of Moses, were intended to be of permanent duration and obligation. Stephen, on the other hand, believed that Christianity was to supersede Judaism and not be merely one of its subordinate sects, and that the ritual service of the temple would fade before the spiritual worship of the Gospel. John 4. 21. This we now know to be the truth, though Stephen was the first to see it clearly. Our concern in it is, that in becoming Christians we do not have to become Jews.

1. THE HAND OF GOD REVEALED IN THE CALL. 1-4.

1. ARE THESE THINGS SO—The judicial interrogatory of the HIGH-PRIEST—the president at the trial.

2. HE SAID—Picture the scene of the seventy judges of the great court sitting in a semicircle, the high-priest at the middle on an elevated seat, and Stephen standing at its center, with his face shining with a supernatural brightness as it were THE FACE OF AN ANGEL. MEN, BROTHERS—This included them all, while FATHERS was respectful toward the older members. THE GOD OF GLORY—The God who manifested himself in the bright cloud of glory in the pillar, on the ark, and at the dedication of the temple. See ver. 55. APPEARED—God had often talked with men, but his first recorded appearance to them was to ABRAHAM. MESOPOTAMIA means between the rivers. It lay between the Euphrates and Tigris. There were two calls of Abraham. The first while he was at Ur, in Chaldea, mentioned here; the second, five years later, at CHARRAN, or Harran, (Gen. 11, 31,) called Carrhe in Roman history. Ur was about 125 miles from the Persian Gulf.

4. OUT OF THE LAND—The first call took Abraham with his wife Sara, HIS FATHER Terah, and his nephew Lot, from the midst of idolaters, and placed them in Haran, far to the north-west. He remained in Haran five years, or until the death of Terah. Then occurred the second call, (Gen. 12. 1.) separating him entirely from his father's house.

2. THE HAND OF GOD REVEALED IN THE COVENANT. 5-8.

5. NONE INHERITANCE—The promise was, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Gen. 12. 7; 13. 15. The gift was not to him personally, but as the representative of his posterity. NO CHILD—It was some ten years before the birth of Ishmael, and twenty-five before that of Isaac. This shows Abraham's faith. He believed God, and then he obeyed him.

6. SOJOURN IN A STRANGE LAND—A land not their own, meaning Canaan and Egypt. Though Canaan was promised, it would not be theirs for a long time. God's promises are good and true, while he selects his own time and way for their fulfillment. This promise was given twenty years after the former. Gen. 15. 13, 14. FOUR HUNDRED YEARS—Reckoning from the birth of Isaac to the departure from Egypt. The four hundred of Exod. 12. 40 begin from the call of Abraham.

7. JUDGE—God judges, condemns, and punishes nations in this world. The judgment-day for individuals men is at the end of time. SERVE.—PLACE—This is the important point, as showing God's plan that Jerusalem should be the place of worship. See Exod. 3. 12.

8. COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION—Besides the promise, God gave the COVENANT of which CIRCUMCISION was the sign, or token, and seal. The stipulations of both sides of the contract he prescribed, Gen. 17. 4-14. Every circumcised child was thereby dedicated to God and in visible covenant relation with him. So is every baptized child now.

3. God's hand revealed in the care. 9-19.

9. SOLD JOSEPH—Gen. 37. 4. 11. 28. GOD WITH HIM—Even outside of Canaan. He was a slave, but God delivered him and placed him in a position of power, where he could greatly serve his cause.

14. THREESCORE AND FIFTY—Seventy-five. In Gen. 46, 26, the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are given as sixty-six. "besides Jacob's sons' wives." Add Jacob, Joseph, and his two sons, and we have the seventy of Gen. 46. 27 and Exod. 1. 6. To the sixty-six add the nine wives of the sons, Jacob's and Joseph's were dead, and

Joseph's was in Egypt,) and omit Joseph's family, and we have seventy-five who came into Egypt.

16. EMMOR—The words THE FATHER are in italics, and were supplied by the translators, supposing the persons were the same as in Gen. 33. 18-20. But this Emmor was probably the son of Shechem, and so should be read according to the usage of the Greek. They were very different parties, and it was a different transaction. So there is not the contradiction that skeptics allege. ABRAHAM must have bought the ground for his altar, Gen. 12. 6, 7; the Shechemites re-occupied it; and Jacob re-purchased it and made it a place of burial.

17. GREW—God watched over this people and rapidly MULTIPLIED them that they might become numerous and strong enough to take possession of and hold the land of PROMISE when the TIME of deliverance should come.

LESSONS. 1. We are not to judge God's truth by the time he takes to fulfill his word. He will choose the right time. Had he given possession of Canaan at once, it is probable that the Hebrews would have been swallowed up in Canaanish idolatry, and the true knowledge of God thus been lost. But to the sinner who asks pardon, the saint who seeks strength, and the sufferer who prays for grace, God's time is now. Exod. 12. 41; Heb. 2. 3; 2 Cor. 6. 2; Heb. 10. 37; 1 Pet. 3. 8, 9. 2. We ought to see God in all events of our lives. Joseph's visit to his brethren was a small thing, yet it was the occasion upon the future of the world turned. Joseph in prison was in calamity, but his road to power was through it. And God is the same to-day, watchful, careful, and loving. Let us learn to trust and follow him, knowing that he cares for us. 1 Sam. 17. 37; 2 Sam. 12. 7; Esth. 4. 14; Prov. 3. 6; Isa. 41. 10; James 1. 17.

HEAVEN ON EARTH.

BY REV. CHAS. B. PITBLADO.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."—1 Cor. ii. 9.

"How can I be happy?" That was the question of a king. The dervish replied, as he pointed to the eagle's nest high on the cliff, "build thy home in heaven!" The text tells of a heaven where we may build our soul-nest. It does not refer to heaven in eternity, but to the heaven here of Christian experience, or of the Spirit's revelation. We cannot prepare a heaven for ourselves. When you build a lasting paradise we want to see it. When you make one thimbleful of bliss let us know. The Spirit is the only revealer of heavenly and spiritual things. Science may reveal some of the coarser, ruder truths. It may dissect a butterfly; but it cannot reveal the life which makes it a butterfly. It weighed the brains of Byron and Webster, but it found not that which made the one a poet, and the other an orator. It may grind a rock to powder, but it cannot reveal the God who built the rock. While there are some things scientifically revealed, and other things practically revealed, there are other and higher things only spiritually revealed. "He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

I. THE CONDITION OF THE SPIRIT'S REVELATION.

Right conditions are essential to all kinds of revelations. The condition to see four thousand such firmaments as ours, is a telescope. The condition to see the volvox spheres circling in a drop of pond water, is a microscope. The condition to hear music in the cells of forest trees, is an ear trumpet not yet discovered. The condition to appreciate Haydn's harmonies, is a trained and sympathetic ear. Some one said to Samuel Johnson, when in a concert room, "Listen, doctor; this is a very difficult piece." "Difficult!" growled the doctor, "I wish it were impossible." While music was a revelation to Handel, it was only noise to Johnson and Pope; and while it wasapture to Pascal, it was only annoyance to Markintosh. The condition to hear the magic utterance in the hymn of the waterfall, and in the "tempo" of

the lither among the reeds, and in the song of the bobolink, is poetic. A condor can hear the storm howling round the rock on which it dwells, and a roebuck can see the thyme it crops, but the poetic ear can hear music in the storm that haunts the rock where the condor dwells, and the poetic eye can see beauty in the thyme which the roebuck crops. Without poetic sight and hearing, the beauty and tone worlds are shut out. Just so without the soul-senses, the spiritual world is shut out.

According to our text the condition of spiritual revelation is "love." Love is queen. She is superior to theology, to science, to poetry. Humanity is beggared without her. Lacking her pathos man would shrivel up like an autumn leaf, or freeze like a drop of water when the thermometer is forty degrees below zero. At Love's girdle hang the keys to the banks of God. She sees where philosophy is blind. She holds the Father's hand in the night tempest, and feels safe. She binds the Christ and the Christian together, and opens the soul to the revelations of heaven. Art thou a lover of God in Christ, or art thou still in the region where no heavenly revelations come to the soul?—in the Greenland of controversy? In the Sahara of mere reason? Spiritual revelations come only to the soul that loves God in Christ supremely. You may love your country like a patriot, fight for it like a hero, and, after all, you may have to take up in eternity the wail of the exile. You may love humanity, so as to give it the hardest toil of hand and brain, and, after all, find your eternity among the loveless. You may love nature, so that every corn-husk or basilisk is an evangel, and every glimpse of reef-rock or tarn is an ecstasy, and, after all, you may die and wake up in a world where every object will be a terror, and every sound an agony. Nature has something to give her lovers, but it don't amount to very much to immortals.

"Visions, as poetic eyes avoid,
Hang to each leaf and cling to every bough."
Emerson may go into ecstasies over the "burly, dozing humble-bee;" his ecstasy is nothing but poetic sentiment. Shelley may tremble into rapture over the skylark,

"In the golden lightning of the sunken sun,"
but his rapture is mere sensation. La Place might revel amid the glories of the skies; so might Halley. But the highest revelations they ever enjoyed from the firmaments were, of necessity, either sensuous or intellectual. No spiritual revelation to the mere scientist or poet. But while the lover of God may have all the sensuous and intellectual revelations that are worth having, he may also enjoy the spiritual blisses which God hath prepared and revealed "to them that love Him." "He that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him."

II. THE JOY OF THE SPIRIT'S REVELATION.

First. The Spirit reveals to the loving heart things of richer beauty than the sensuous "eye" ever saw. "Eye hath not seen." It may be no crazy idealism of philosophy when it tells about beauty dwelling in the mind, rather than in the violet or the titmouse. It may be that sublimity has its home, not so much in twilight suns as in the human spirit of the gazer. Nevertheless, the eye is the medium through which the soul gathers the beauties which it may half create, from the copse and cascade, from the cordillera and the corn-crake. Since first through the eye, mind and matter met, rich communications have been going on—going on through other's eyes, and former's eyes, and transfer of eyes and painter's eyes. All men feel, with Keats, that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever"

"But 'eye hath not seen' beauty rich enough, nor sublimity magnificent enough to stir the soul with such joy as stirs it when the Spirit reveals to it the fadeless beauty of Jesus. I remember the quiver of delight with which I looked, for the first time, upon a sunrise on the Atlantic. As fresh as of yore is the strange pleasure that fluttered through my young soul when first I beheld a mossy dingle full of primroses—clusters by the brook, clusters along broscades, clusters everywhere. Since then my soul-eyes have been opened, and I have been thrilled with deeper joys. Since then I have stood in the sunrise of Righteousness, and gazed upon the Lily of the Valley, and felt "the perfection of beauty" satisfying my soul with freshness of joy with bewildering of peace. A blind boy had a successful operation performed on his eyes. When he first looked upon nature he cried, "O mother, why did you not tell me the world was so beautiful?" Many a soul with newly-opened eyes has cried, "Why did you not tell me Immanuel was so beautiful?" Who can? That mother could more easily have given her little blind son an idea of the world bathed in gold, than man or angel could give the blind soul an idea of the beauty of the Christ. He is the Altogether Lovely.

Second. The Spirit reveals to the loving, things of greater harmony and eloquence than the sensuous "ear" ever heard. "Nor ear heard," etc. Ears have heard nature singing her matin cantatas and her glowing doxologies. Ears have been charmed with echoes among crags and woodlands—with the echoes of the falcon's scream and the cuckoo's call, and the school-boy's shout. Ears have been ravished with the music of art and the magic words of oratory. But music is too gross and the words of eloquence, even of masters like Bossuet and Edward Irving, too vague and stunting, to reveal any conception of the music and eloquence of revelation "things." "No ear ever heard" such melody as fills the soul when the Holy Ghost touches the keys of the organ of grace and glory. Young Mendelssohn went into the cathedral between services. He sat down at the organ and began to play. The priests heard the music and came in to listen. They wondered. They drew nearer. They were electrified with the gushing harmony. The Gospel is a grand spiritual organ. When played upon by the Spirit—the loving listeners are entranced. The nearer they approach, the more they are transported with the music that gushes up where keys of prophecy and promise, invitation and reward, are touched by the Spirit of God. How the music of pardon enraptures, and the music of sanctification entrances the soul. Roll on, O harmonies of the Spirit! roll on through the chancels and isles and corridors of our souls Music! Holy Ghost music!

Third. The Spirit reveals things of greater affection than human love ever enjoyed, and of keener *verve* than genius ever dreamed, "Neither have entered into the heart," etc. Heart is the fountain of love. Since Adam saw Eve the world has been full of lovers. All down the ages hearts have clasped and felt the magnetic tingle; souls have mingled and known the joys of oneness. Precious and priceless are the revelations of human love; but the revelations of divine love are infinitely more precious. This love fills the whole soul as the sunlight fills the raindrop. Other love is pleasure, this is ecstasy. This love haunts the palace and grooves deep down in the ocean of peace, where human love can never cast her plumb-line. This love is familiar among the mountain tops of bliss where the feet of human love can never stand.