

"The Son of Man" and "The man of the earth."

Psalms 8 and 10.

F. B. Hole.

(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 27, 1935, page 51.)

The name of Jehovah our Lord is excellent. Beyond all question it excels every other name. Its excellence is fully acknowledged in the heaven of heavens, but not yet in all the earth. In the larger part of the earth it is still blasphemed. The day approaches when the statement made in the first verse of Psalm 8, and repeated in the last verse, will be gloriously fulfilled. But for that day we have to wait.

Today we should have to exclaim the rather, - O Lord our Lord, how dishonoured is Thy name in all the earth! There is a reason for this, and our short Psalm identifies the source of the mischief in one word — "*man*." Having done so, it passes on at once to dwell upon the great Personage who is going to make the name of the Lord excellent in all the earth — "*the Son of Man*."

If we pass on to Psalm 9 we get a good deal more about the "*man*" who is the root of the trouble; and this sorrowful theme is continued throughout Psalm 10. Indeed in this latter Psalm the theme seems to rise to a climax, and the character of "*man*" is fully exposed, until we reach mention of one who is to come, in whom human evil will rise to its heights. In the last verse of Psalm 10 he is designated as "*the man of the earth*."

In the Old Testament several words are used for "*man*." One of them is *enosh*, which, we are told, has the significance of "*frail mortal man*," being almost a term of contempt. This is the word used when the Psalmist asks the question in Psalm 9, when he says, "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail;" and also, "Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men." It is used again in Psalm 10, when he speaks of "*the man of the earth*."

Now this is very instructive. "*Enosh*" may be a pretty big fellow in his own estimation, and in the sight of others. When he rises to his full height he may do many pretentious things. He may defy God. He may oppress those who fear God. But after all, he is only "*the frail, mortal man of the earth*." With heaven he has nothing to do.

Will our readers scrutinize this tenth Psalm in which the character of unconverted man is exposed. They will discover that five times over he is called, "*the wicked*." He is not only called that, but also what constitutes his wickedness is described: in one word, it is the pride of his heart.

He doth persecute the poor but it is his pride that moves him to do it. He is covetous and "*blesseth the covetous*" (ver. 3), and his pride leads him to boast of this evil feature. Again he has no desire for God: "God is not in all his thoughts" (ver. 4), and this is because of the pride of his countenance. He totally excludes God from his thoughts, and this is because he is filled with self-sufficiency and imagines that he will never be moved. Further, the question is asked, "*Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God?*" (ver. 13). The answer is obvious. Only the most insufferable pride could lead him to treat God with contempt. No wonder then that in verse 15 we have the prayer, "*Break Thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man*"; a prayer which will be answered in due time.

This description of the wicked was penned some three thousand years ago, nevertheless it exactly fits the present leaders of the world of the ungodly. They completely rule God out of everything. They exclude Him everywhere, as far as their thoughts are concerned. They deny His action in creation. They do not admit His presence in Christ: the Jesus of history is to them merely a superior kind of man.

They do not recognize any moving of His hand in the affairs of today. He is outside the scope of all their politics, their business, their science, their philosophy. And if some of them cannot do without a religion of some kind, they take care that even there He shall be pushed far into the background, as a vague and shadowy Being who can be pretty safely ignored.

From the Psalmist's day to our own, throughout the three millenniums, this wickedness has been manifested. Today it is evidently working up to a climax. We will let the New Testament sum up the situation for us: "The mystery of iniquity [or, lawlessness] doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed" (1 Thess. 2: 7, 8). The lawless pride of man has been working, but being held in check it has taken on mysterious or secret forms. The greatest activity of this evil has been in and amongst the Christianized nations; but just there the restraining power of the Holy Spirit, indwelling the saints, has been most felt.

That restraining power will however be withdrawn in due season, and then the iniquity no longer held in check will blaze forth and reach its culmination in "that Wicked"; spoken of in our Psalm as, "the man of the earth." His leading characteristic is opposition to God. Thessalonians emphasizes this, as also does our Psalm, which also discovers to us that he will be an oppressor of God's people. Those two things of course go together. He will express his opposition against the God whom he cannot reach by oppressing the saints whom he can reach.

He is the man of the EARTH. Even in the apostolic age Paul had to write of some as, "the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3: 18, 19). He will be all this carried to its highest power. Earth will fill his every thought: it will bound his horizon, and there will be no sky line for him. The average modernist, whether minister or layman, is exactly on those lines today. They travel in that direction, though they have not as yet reached the terminus.

The saints whom the man of the earth will oppress will doubtless be those raised up of God after the church has been translated. Their character is very beautifully portrayed in Psalm 10. Five times over are the features of the wicked mentioned, and the character of the saints is also presented under five headings.

They are "*the poor*" (ver. 2). That is, of course, poor in spirit, and not merely in worldly possessions. Their poverty of spirit is the exact opposite of the pride which is the distinguishing feature of frail mortal man.

They are "*the innocent*" (ver. 8). They are not party to all the cursing, deceit, fraud, devices that fill the lives of the wicked.

They are "*the humble*" (ver. 12). The margin has it "the afflicted." They neither have big ideas of themselves nor do they make big claims. Hence frequently they get pushed on one side and troubled.

They are "*the fatherless*" (ver. 14). They have no natural protector; no one on earth to stand up in their defence, and protect their rights.

They are "*the oppressed*" (ver. 18). Being of God, they become the special object of the hate of the adversary; and the man of the earth will become the devil's instrument for their oppression.

Notice that the list begins with "the poor," and ends with "the oppressed." In this it agrees with the beatitudes of Matthew 5, which begin with the blessedness of "the poor in spirit," and end with the blessedness of those "which are persecuted," whether for righteousness sake or for the sake of the Lord Himself. So we may be sure that whether it be the day in which the Psalmist lived, or when our Lord

was on earth, or our day, or the day when the man of the earth will flourish for a very short space, the moral features which God loves to see in His saints are the same.

Let us take good note of them, and be exercised thereby. For we may be sure that one reason why we come so little into collision with the men of this age is that we are so little marked by these features which are so sharply in contrast with them. The wicked in his pride doth persecute "the poor." He does indeed, no matter what the age may be. As soon as "the poor" is in evidence he simply itches to persecute him. The wicked we have with us right enough. But where is the poor? Well, if the wicked of this age compliment us and pat us on the back, it raises some serious questions!

When "the man of the earth" seizes power for a few brief moments he will display in highest measure the hideous deformities of fallen man. Then David's question in Psalm 8, "what is man, that Thou art mindful of Him?" will take on an added significance. David asked that question, and saw him dwarfed into nothingness by the splendours of God's inanimate creation. He also saw him set aside, that out of the mouth of even babes and sucklings He might give forth and establish His Word. "The enemy and the avenger" — who may perhaps be identified with "the man of the earth" of Psalm 10 — is to be stilled not by the efforts of mortal man, but by God Himself, working through the feeblest and most insignificant instruments. That work is reserved for the Son of Man Himself.

Now when the Spirit of God inspired David to write Psalm 8, and verse 4 was reached, He led him to change the word for "man." He avoided the word *enosh* in the title, "Son of Man." The first part of his question was, "what is *enosh*?" The second part was, "and the Son of Adam that Thou visitest Him?" Adam is the generic term for man, and does not carry of necessity the reproach and contempt that is connected with *enosh*. Our Lord was truly the Son of Adam as the genealogy given in Luke's Gospel so definitely shows. But when He is thus traced up to Adam the line given is that of Mary His mother; involving the virgin birth, by which the natural entail of sin and death connected with Adam was broken. He was truly Son of Adam, and yet *Man of a new order*.

What is the Son of Man that He should be visited by Jehovah? Why, He is everything. He is all that Jehovah Himself could wish. Verse 5 gives us first His humiliation and death; but also His present glory. Verses 6 to 8 give us the public glory and dominion that shall be His in the coming day.

We are told in 1 Peter 1: 10 and 11, that the prophets of old had to inquire and search diligently to discern the mind of the Spirit who spoke through them. Often doubtless they had to search the very words they had just written with anxious enquiry as to their full meaning. It may very probably have been thus with David when he had written verses 5 to 8 of our Psalm. Even then did he discern, we wonder, what words referred to the sufferings of the Christ, and what to the glory that should follow? Could he have detected that the very glory that should follow would be divided into that which is His now in private, and that which presently shall be His in public display?

It is perfectly obvious to us. But then we have the privilege of that light which is shed by the New Testament writings. We have the inspired comment of Hebrews 2: 6-9. In the light of that passage all is plain.

Man's place in the original scale of creation is a little lower than the place of angels. He, whom we know as Son of Man, was not in that lower place to begin with. He entered into it by an act of God. It was not what He *was*, but what He *became*. This lower and lowly place was His as ordered of Jehovah, and He took it that thereby He might become obedient unto death. The man of the earth displays the apotheosis of human pride and lawlessness. The humbled Son of Man became the holy Servant of God to accomplish all His good pleasure. That pleasure included the tasting of death for all, and the triumphant bringing of many sons to glory, as Hebrews 2 reveals.

But He was rejected on earth, and hence as risen He is gone from human sight into the heavens, and meanwhile poor *enosh* monopolizes the earth and drags out his sad story to culminate in the man of the earth. Jesus is crowned with glory and honour in the presence of the Father. There it is we see Him by faith. The splendid priestly vestments that were made in the wilderness for Aaron, and which apparently he wore but once, were "for glory and for beauty." Our High Priest sits in the heavens, "crowned with glory and honour." There and thus He is today.

The hour approaches when another act of God will take place. Three times over do we get an act of God in these verses: one for the the past, one for the present, one for the future. Jehovah made Him a little lower than the angels. Jehovah has crowned Him with glory and honour. Jehovah will yet set Him over — or, make Him to have dominion over — the works of His hands, with all things under His feet, as the Psalm predicts.

The prediction is a very sweeping one, commented upon twice in the New Testament — 1 Corinthians 15, and Hebrews 2. The former scripture points out that inasmuch as the putting of all things under His feet is an act of God, He who acts must be excepted from the statement. The latter scripture asserts that, subject to this solitary exception, the statement is all-inclusive, there is absolutely nothing that is not put under Him.

In that day consequently everything will be as He orders it, and at long last, as a result the name of Jehovah will be excellent in all the earth. Instead of setting forth the evil pleasure of the will of man, everything will declare the excellence of the good pleasure of God. The Divine glory will be set above the heavens in the person of Jesus.

So the world to come is to be placed under Man. What an amazing development this is! When Adam in innocence was placed in the garden he certainly was granted dominion over this earthly creation. When he fell and became subject to death all was slipping from his hands. Who would have imagined for one moment that MAN was yet to dominate ALL THINGS? From Psalm 8, it is true, we could only discern that He is to dominate all things on earth. Hebrews 2 reveals that the "all things" has so wide a meaning as to embrace things in the heavens also.

Well may our hearts sigh and long to see the Son of Man in that exalted place, and Jehovah's name covered with glory. Well, we are going to see it in its season. We wait to see our Lord Jesus in the place of which He is so worthy.

Meanwhile we continue to sing,

"Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray,
That prospect bright, unfailing
Where God shall shine in light divine,
In glory never fading."