

## Common Ground!

N. Anderson.

The general trend in things religious at the present time is to form a world-church, embracing every breed and every creed. This movement takes in Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians of every shade; hence the need of a common basis of communion. Its leaders think that they have discovered such in the acceptance of the universal Fatherhood of God, and the universal Brotherhood of man.

It seems that they have found Scripture support for their ideas in such Scriptures as Acts 17: 29; 1 Corinthians 8: 6; and Ephesians 4: 6. Do these Scriptures lend support to the present trend? Or is there some misapprehension of them on the part of those who adduce them? Let us look then at those passages of Scripture in their contexts.

Please read Acts 17: 22-34 inclusive; then 1 Cor. 8: 5, 6; finally, Ephesians 4: 6.

Consider Acts 17: 28 — The preacher, being none other than the Apostle Paul, said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring." This seems to be conclusive enough, when detached from its context! The word "offspring" seems to denote relationship, but does it? The word is akin to "become, to be, generation, kind." As used by the apostle in quoting their poets he uses the word offspring as denoting their having received being, "For in him we live, and move, and have our *being*." The thought of creaturehood is implicit in "offspring" and not relationship.

Every man has come connection with God — for He has created them all. Thus He stands in respect to men as Creator. This is as far as His Fatherhood goes, He is in this sense the Originator of all.

As to 1 Corinthians 8: 6 — ". . . there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . ." Note, that here there is a distinction made between believers and unbelievers. The verse really reads, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in (for) Him." Only those born again and believing are in relationship with Him. See Galatians 3: 26, "For ye are all the children (sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Also, John 1: 12, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right of privilege) to become the sons (children) of God, even to them that believe on His Name." Relationship then is by faith and not creation.

Then, as to Ephesians 4: 6, note that here again relationship is limited. The two aspects of the Fatherhood of God are before us in this passage. "One God and Father of all" — as Creator and thus the Originator and Governor of all, but again, note how relationship is limited, "and in you (us) all."

Having said so much as we have, let us look at some passages where there does seem to be a common basis.

Romans 3: 22, 23 and Romans 10: 12 — These two Scriptures both say, "There is no difference" Why then do we say that there is no common ground for communion or, rather, fellowship? Look carefully at the Scriptures referred to. That in Romans 3 says, "There is no difference: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 10 says, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." To claim the common ground which these two Scriptures afford is first of all to admit to being guilty before God, and then to admit to being lost! The guilty need to be justified: the lost need to be saved.

These two things, being guilty and lost, are the attendants of the fall of man. Man lost any basis that he might have had for drawing near unto his Creator by reason of his disobedience in Eden's garden. Those four questions asked by God elicited answers from Adam which demonstrated how he had fallen from his first estate.

1. Genesis 3: 9 "And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?"

2. Genesis 3: 11 "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked?"

3. Genesis 3: 11 "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"

4. Genesis 3: 13 "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?"

Note, in reverse order: "What hast thou done? and "Where art thou?" — Guilt and State.

Adam blamed God, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, And I did eat." The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." The woman blamed the serpent.

How had the serpent beguiled her, or as the New Testament says, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2: 14).

The serpent had deceived her by insinuating a doubt in her mind, for had he not said unto her, "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" The woman lied to the serpent saying, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat."

So there was held out by the serpent, the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life. The principles which make up the world system, against which the young men in the family of God are warned in 1 John 2: 16. Thus the first pair succumbed to those allurements and lost their place, being driven out of the earthly paradise. God in righteousness, yet in mercy, having clothed the guilty husband and wife with coats of skins, indicating that the only suitable clothing for His holy eyes was that which sacrifice had provided, placed cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. The attributes of God were harnessed in His unrelinquished guardianship of the guilty pair. "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."

Thank God, for the Seed of the woman, our Lord Jesus Christ, that Holy Thing, called Son of God. He came into the world by way of the womb of the virgin, and having assumed Manhood was tempted as was the first man. Not in a garden of plenty but in a barren wilderness. There He triumphed over the devil, who left Him for a season, waiting until he deemed the time was ripe for another onslaught against the Son of God. Our holy Lord, assailed in Gethsemane's garden, refused to take the cup from the hand of the devil. There, against the dark background of the disobedience of the first man, He, the Second Man out of heaven, proved obedient even unto death and that the death of the cross. Such was His perfection that, then and there, by His crucifixion He opened the way, righteously, back to God. Vindicating the claim which He had earlier made, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14: 6).

Thus, and only thus, has common ground been made whereon man, estranged from God by sin, can come to God in perfect righteousness. Not by claiming, erroneously, that we are all part of the universal Brotherhood of man, under the universal Fatherhood of God. But by acknowledging what is avowedly true, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," owning with thanksgiving, that "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."