

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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I.

In The Name of Jesus Christ

Christmas Sermon, 1787.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1. 14.

Introduction.

Behold the man is become as one of us.

Thus God spoke to the first man, after he had fallen into sin, but also had received a promise of reparation through the woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head. In the previous verse we read that God had made for Adam and his wife coats of skin, which doubtless had been taken from a sacrificed animal, the first type of the great sacrifice of atonement. They now stood before God, externally clothed in the bloody garb of the sacrificial lamb and internally clothed in the bloody righteousness of the Saviour, who should come in the fulness of time and shed His blood and give His life in death. God now points at them and says, "Behold, the man is become as one of us" (Gen. 3. 22).

God did not speak scornfully, for it is below His dignity to scoff at an unfortunate creature. Neither did He speak reproachfully, for He had already chosen

a Helper, who should provide such a remedy that there would be no room for reproach. When God reconciled the world unto Himself, He did not reckon unto them their trespasses. No, God spoke lovingly, then as always. Man had aspired to be like God, in a measure and manner that could not be, and he thus cast himself into sin and wretchedness, but God took pity upon him and provided other ways and means, whereby man should be able to regain such likeness unto God as can be attained by man. Human nature should be united with one of the Godhead. A son of man should become a Son of God. The human nature of the Saviour should be exalted to the majesty and perfection of God. As John the Baptist pointed at the Saviour and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," so God pointed at Adam, who was a prototype of Christ, the second Adam, pointed out "the mystery of godliness," that God should be "manifested in the flesh," and said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us."

Just as human nature in Christ became a partaker of the majesty of the Godhead, so God likewise in Christ appropriated human nature and its characteristics; and so we, human beings, may apply these words to ourselves and say concerning Christ, the second Adam, "Behold, God has become as one of us," and this is to be our theme to-day.

God Like One of Us.

We are then to show, first, that God has become like one of us and, secondly, to point out the salvation that lies therein.

First Part.

God has become like one of us in person. Our text says, "The Word became flesh." The self-existing Word, which was God Himself, became flesh, that is, appropriated human nature, which in the Scriptures is called flesh. The evangelist had previously and in a splendid manner described this Word. "In the beginning was the Word etc. — The Word became flesh." The incomprehensible divine Being revealed Himself even to the bodily senses, so that He could be seen like another man, Himself also being a real man. "We beheld His glory." But there was in Him, as any one mindful to see and to think might well observe, something more than the transient glory which wretched, powerless human beings may possess and bring forth. "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." The infinite God, who has no limitations, and whose perfections are self-sufficient and without measure, has entered into union with a finite, limited being, whose life terminates in death, and whom God measures with a span. The Eternal, who was in the beginning, the everlasting God, began to be a man when the Word became flesh. Almighty God, through whom all things are made, became united with a human being, whom He had Himself formed from that which does not appear. "Without Him was not anything made that has been made." He, in whom was life, and who gives life to every living thing, began to live here as a man and closed his life by dying as a man. The Word became flesh. In Him also as a man was fulfilled the word, "All flesh is grass."

God became as one of us with reference to dwelling, "And dwelt among us." He lived as we do in this world and found Himself in the wretched conditions appertaining to this life. He had previously, from the creation of man, dwelt among us as a man. The first abode of this King of Glory was a stable. Thereupon He lived in a poor carpenter's cottage, and eventually He became like a beggar, without any fixed abode. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." Nevertheless He endured such a life more than thirty years. Some who enter into this world immediately take their departure and close their day long before evening. Some attain the medium span of life. He dwelt under the vault of heaven on His journey to Egypt, where He lived some time as a stranger. He lived in Nazareth among godless people. He spent days and nights in the desert and occasionally spent his nights on some mountain in prayer. He journeyed on the sea and sought repose in the ship. Finally His body found rest in the grave, while His soul entered into the abode of eternal peace. In short, there are no circumstances nor conditions belonging to this present life in which the Son of God has not become like one of us, except one, that, while He was true man, He was not a sinner. He was a man, "Being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man."

Second Part.

We are here to point out the blessedness which lies in the fact that God has become as one of us.

This blessedness is contained in the words "full of

grace and truth." As the glory revealed in Christ was from God, so also are grace and truth infinitely great and divine, eternal and unfailing. "We beheld His glory, glory of the only begotten from the Father."

It was the glory which the Son of God had with the Father from eternity, by virtue of His eternal birth of the Father, the glory of the only begotten Son. This glory was revealed on several occasions in the life of Jesus. It was seen by men, in a real though not absolute sense, "glory *as* of the only begotten." At His birth, it was seen by shepherds though they were men of low degree. "The glory of the Lord shone round about them," when the angel of the Lord brought them "good tidings of great joy." The glory thus revealed was full of grace, for the angel made the proclamation, "Be not afraid: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." It was also portrayed in the angels' song of praise,

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace
Among men in whom He is well pleased."

This glory was also full of truth, for the truth of the Messianic promises now became confirmed through their fulfillment, from the first promise given in paradise, concerning the woman's Seed which should bruise the serpent's head, to the last proclaimed by Malachi, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple," for, said the angel, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In the angels' message and song of praise was verified the prophetic rhapsody of Isaiah:

“Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth,
And break forth into singing, O mountains:
For the Lord hath comforted His people,
And will have compassion upon His afflicted.”

The glory of Jesus appeared on several occasions during His humiliation, especially in His miracles, but it nevertheless shone most brightly in His death, when “He was despised and rejected of men.” Then His glory shone brightly into the eyes of the centurion, who, though he was a blind heathen, saw the glory of the only begotten Son, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Upon His resurrection Jesus reclaimed the full use of His divine glory, but it was only His friends who could now and at His ascension see His glory. Nevertheless it was full of grace and truth whenever and to whomsoever it appeared. Grace was thereby procured, and the truth from heaven confirmed.

God has become as one of us, and therefore we need not become like one of the devils. When man acquiesced in the will of the devil he became like the fallen angel. The Satanic image was impressed on the human soul. Man became likeminded with the devil and began to love evil as he does. Man was therefore destined to receive the same unblessed abode and the same frightful reward as the devil, since his works were like those of the devil; but, “To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” By virtue of the fact that God became as one of us, came to the earth and dwelt among us, paid our debts, suffered for our sins, and fulfilled the law, there is wrought a wonderful transformation. The Spirit of

God is by the Word sent into our hearts, the image of the evil one is destroyed in the new birth, we are justified and delivered from the power of the devil and from eternal condemnation, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham."

God became as one of us, and therefore we may become like one of the Godhead. The Son of God appropriated human nature, and therefore we "may become partakers of the divine nature." The Son of God became a man, "in all things made like unto His brethren," though He was "The effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His substance"; and therefore the image of God, lost in the fall, can be restored in us, when we become "conformed to the image of His son." Atonement required such likeness. "It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be merciful and a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." When the Saviour made this propitiation, God considered Him as one of us, like us even in matters where, in Himself, He was not like us; in order that we should by God be considered like Jesus, even in matters where we were otherwise entirely unlike Him. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on

our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

A person who has attained such likeness to Christ, "who is the image of God," will by virtue thereof attain an even greater likeness to Him in the day of His coming. Concerning this John the apostle writes, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall then see Him even as He is." On that day the supreme likeness of the saints to their Saviour shall extend even to their bodies. "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself."

Application.

Can you, my dear listeners, say, as John did, "We beheld His glory?" The blind cannot see, neither can those who are sleeping. Are your thoughts blind and is your heart asleep to all this gracious glory? Do you not, even now when we commemorate the Saviour's birth, perceive the blessedness which was revealed, when God became as one of us? Do you not know of any other blessedness at Christmas than that of eating and drinking and that of earthly pleasures? You are then wasting your days of grace, you are remaining in the unblest condition from which Jesus would save you. He became like you in order that you should not become like the devils, but you have made yourself thus by

breaking the covenant and dissolving the fellowship with God entered into in holy baptism. You have surrendered to Satan to do his will and to be of his mind. You have done this by opposing God and continuing in sin. Do you not see that you have become like the devil, for "He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning?" "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." What else can you then expect than that which the devil himself anticipates with fear and trembling, "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries"? Nevertheless, the very salvation of which you are unmindful still awaits you, to be gained, if you but heed its call and seek thereafter while it is yet to be obtained. If you perceive a somewhat clearer glimpse of your unblessedness, oh, this is a beam of the glory of the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth. Be concerned that, by the Word of God, you may better understand the heavenly truth which has begun to enlighten your darkened mind. The power of the Word which you feel entering your heart is an earnest of God's grace. Accept it, and pray that you may receive more. Keep that which you have received, lest it too be lost.

But someone says, "I am not entirely blind, but still I cannot see the glory of grace in Jesus. I can see nothing but my sins with their ugliness and condemnation." Bless the Lord that you have been thus enlightened, to begin with, and continue to pray as David did,

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold
Wondrous things out of Thy law.”

Look longingly for the glory of Jesus, which He has revealed in His Word; look for the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The time will come, when you shall be able to confess with the congregation of true believers, “We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Son of God has taken upon Himself to suffer the unblestness and distress from which you are suffering and to become like you therein, in order that you may attain the great glory of becoming like Him. Jesus is willing and able to reveal His glory to precisely such an one as you, for the mercy which He shows and the salvation which He confers will in such as you redound to His praise. Do not forget the hidden delight which you have already experienced, because God has become as one of us. Cherish the new hope thus enkindled that all may work together for good.

When I look for those who can say, “We beheld His glory,” there doubtless is here present some one who can say, “Yes, in the glory of God’s commandments I saw my perverted life, my corrupted heart, and the punishment I had merited, but the Lord also opened the eyes of my understanding to the “Light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” and I saw, not with carnal eyes nor in illusive visions, but in the clear gospel I saw, as clearly and certainly as ever I could see with my bodily eyes, that God became a man even for me, that Christ had by God been considered as a sinner; and so I believe that, for His sake, I am considered

righteous as He, and renewed to His likeness, and I can now hope to become like Him in eternal honor and glory." — "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see!" But beware, lest the spirit of the world may obscure this glory, or the heat of passion may darken the brightness which the eye of faith has acquired by beholding the glory of the only begotten Son of God. Remember that there still remains in you somewhat of the image of Satan, which Jesus overthrew when He delivered you out of the power of darkness. Fight the good fight to obliterate every trait of the evil one, and make it your earnest endeavor to become more and more like Him, who for that purpose became like you. Amen.