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BALAAM.

NUMB. 22—24.

The history of Balaam, as recorded by Moses, Numb. 22—24, is beyond doubt one of the most interesting and instructive parts of the Old Testament. There are many things which commend it to the special study and meditation of the thoughtful and diligent Bible student. It is a singular and unique personage and character which in these chapters is portrayed to the reader of the good Book, — Balaam, the Seer, — and yet we see in this strange man the picture and type of many that have received from God great spiritual gifts and have occupied a high place in the Church of God, but, being blinded by the things of this world, have forgotten again their high calling and have rushed anew into the snares and clutches of Satan, into temporal and eternal ruin. But if the character and personage of Balaam are such as to arouse our special interest, his extraction, the remote time in which he lived, his sudden appearance in the history of Israel, and the part which he plays in it, also certainly engage our attention in no small degree. Balaam is a native of a heathen country, a contemporary of Moses and Joshua, and without having any previous intercourse with God's chosen people, he is suddenly confronted with the same, at a time when Israel had pitched its tents on the eastern boundaries of the promised land, ready to fight in the name of their God, their hearts swelled with the certain hope of victory and conquest. Called by a heathen king to

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

(Continued.)

THE SECOND ARTICLE.

JESUS CHRIST IS TRUE GOD, 1. BECAUSE THE SCRIPTURES
ASCRIBE DIVINE NAMES TO HIM.

Rom. 9, 5: *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God, blessed for ever. Amen.*

The paragraph of which this passage forms a part enumerates the great prerogatives vouchsafed to the Jews. The apostle writes: "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises." Exalted prerogatives, indeed! The polysyndeton: and—and—and, is to arrest the attention of the readers, to cause them to ponder each prerogative separately, so that they may see, feel, realize how highly favored they are. In our text this enumeration continues: "*and whose are the fathers,*" sc., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To be descended from such illustrious ancestors, from men so highly honored of God, was a great distinction. But a greater and higher advantage follows: "*and of whom*"—of the Israelites—"Christ came." To appreciate this prerogative duly, the apostle sets forth who Christ is. "*Concerning the flesh*"—*κατὰ σάρκα*—*as to the flesh*, according to His human nature, He is a descendant of the Jews, a *true man*. Why are they to account Christ's being born among them such

a great honor? The climax of the whole grand thought follows, setting forth the prerogatives of the Jews in their strongest light. This Christ, who is true man, is at the same time "*over all God*,"—ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός,—the supreme God, to whom the sacred doxology applies: "*blessed for ever*."

Here Paul directly asserts Christ to be very God. He is God, over all God, God in the fullest, highest sense of the word. This is the plain, simple meaning of this grand text, which any Christian reader, not biased by dogmatical prejudices, readily apprehends.

Were it not for the fact that so many strenuous efforts had been made, especially by such as deny the divinity of Christ, to torture the text and thus empty it of its sublime truth, our task were done as far as this passage is concerned. However, the objections raised compel us to enter somewhat more deeply into a discussion of the matter.

Let us again look at the text. It reads: "*Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is—*." What is the antecedent of *who*? Obviously: *Christ*. The apostle speaks of no one else. So we read on: "*who*," *sc.*, Christ, "*is over all God*." The plain, grammatical construction demands the "*who*" clause to be referred to Christ, and the sense therefore is: Christ is the supreme God.

Again, if we look at the thought-connection, the result will be the same. In the clause: "*of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came*," the limitation, "*as concerning the flesh*," obviously implies a contrast and demands a correlative. We naturally ask: If Christ is descended from the Jews as to the flesh, as to His human nature, what, then, is He as to His higher nature? And the answer is: He is "*over all God*." Here is the unmistakable antithesis to *κατὰ σάρκα*. Or does the *κατὰ σάρκα*, as some contend, not demand an antithesis? Why, then the phrase: "*as concerning the flesh*," is entirely superfluous, and the apostle might have simply written: "*of whom Christ came*." *Stuart's* remark is to the point: "But if He, Christ, had no other nature, why should such a distinction as

is implied by *κατὰ σάρκα* be here designated? Would a sacred writer say of David, for example, that he was descended from Abraham *κατὰ σάρκα*? If this should be said, it would imply that *κατὰ πνεῦμα* he was not descended from Abraham, but from some one else. But here, the other nature of Christ is designated by the succeeding phrase, *ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός.*" (Stuart, *Com. on Romans*, p. 376.)

Why raise difficulties here where the text is so plain? Why willfully try to close one's eyes to the force of the passage? Unbelief is at the bottom of it all. Christ is to be dethroned. The one thing all objections have in common is this: the doxology is to be referred to the Father. Thus the great truth that Christ is called God is to be eliminated. But all such exegetical tricks are in vain. The words of Luther, uttered on another occasion, apply here also: "Der Text steht zu gewaltig da."

Which are some of the suggestions made as to another reading of the text? Some say: Place a period after the word "all." The words then read: "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all. God blessed for ever." The doxology, "God blessed for ever," as has been said, is to apply to God the Father. How, we ask, is a doxology to the Father possible here? Nothing is said of the Father in the context. The subject spoken of is Christ. And where, then, is the antithesis to *κατὰ σάρκα*? Furthermore, a doxology pertaining to the Father is out of place here, because it breaks the trend of thought too abruptly. The reader is in no way prepared for it, because no reason for it has been given. No, the apostle's mind is not given to such freakish, clownish jumps. — In addition to all this the thought-connection of the paragraph manifests the utter absurdity of introducing a doxology to the Father. Says *Stuart*: "There is something incongruous in a doxology here to God the Father. The apostle is here expressing the deepest and most unfeigned regret of his soul, that, notwithstanding the exalted and peculiar privileges of the Jewish nation, they had by their unbelief forfeited them all, and made themselves obnoxious to a most terrible condemnation. To

break out into a doxology here would be (as Flatt suggests) like saying: "These special privileges have, by being abused, contributed greatly to enhance the guilt and punishment of the Jewish nation; God be thanked that He has given them such privileges!" It is a duty, indeed, to be grateful for blessings which are bestowed, but—all in its proper place. Doxologies are not appropriate to paragraphs, which give an account of mercies abused, and deep guilt contracted."

But, suppose for the sake of argument we should grant the untenable punctuation of the sentence given above, and have the text read: "Of whom concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all,"—does not the clause, "*who is over all*," say that Christ is the supreme God, that He is, as the Epistle to the Ephesians puts it, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," and that all things are put under His feet? If Christ is "over all," if all things are under His feet, is He not true God? Most emphatically, yes. For to explain "*who is over all*" as meaning, who is over all the fathers, *i. e.*, greater than all the fathers, is an exegesis so frigid and says so little in the context that it cannot be entertained for a minute. But the attempt to thus distort the text shows to what desperate straits the opponents are driven. *Hodge* pointedly remarks: "*Over all*,' *i. e.*, over all things, not over all persons. The *πάντων* is neuter, and not masculine; see Acts 10, 37; 1 Cor. 15, 28. It is supremacy over the universe which is here expressed."

But rather than concede that Christ is called God in our text, as is so plainly done, the rationalists unmercifully break its grammatical construction, violate the context, and what not. Others place a period after the term *σάρκα*, making the passage read thus: "Of whom Christ came as concerning the flesh." The relative clause following, which is so intimately connected with the preceding: "who is over all God blessed for ever,"—*ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς ἐδόξητος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*,—they treat as an independent sentence embodying an entirely new thought.

It has nothing whatever to do, they say, with Christ mentioned in the preceding clause. They translate: "He who is over all God blessed for ever," and contend the doxology refers to God the Father, not to Christ. The reasons urged against the false rendering noted above apply with equal force to this one: 1. Christ is the immediate subject of the discourse, not the Father. 2. A doxology to the Father is too abrupt here. 3. It is incongruous. Aside from these arguments: 4. There is no antithesis to *κατὰ σάρκα*. — "If God were to be the subject of a new, independent sentence and were at the same time to be designated as the one who is over all, *ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός* without *ὢν* would have been the adequate expression according to the analogy of similar Greek locutions, as, for example, *ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ὀπλων*, *ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπηρετικῶν*, *ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς φρουρᾶς*, *ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων*. With the Greek fathers the constant designation of God is *ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός*." (Stoekhardt, *Roemerbrief*, p. 419.)

Thus we see it is contrary to the grammatical arrangement of the text to look upon the "who" clause as an independent sentence. On the other hand, the *ὁ ὢν* in our text, that is to say, the article *ὁ* followed by the participle *ὢν*, is equivalent to *ὅς ἐστι*, *who is*. This construction is often found in the Greek language, *e. g.*, John 1, 18; 3, 13; 12, 17; 2 Cor. 11, 31. The truth of the matter is: the *ὁ ὢν* = *who is*, is intimately connected with the principal clause. The antecedent of "who" is *Christ*, and the sentence must read: "*Christ who is . . . blessed for ever.*"

Again, if we examine the form of the doxology as proposed by the opponents, we find it to be: *θεός ἐδόξητος* = *God blessed*. Says *Hodge*: "No such doxology occurs in all the Bible. That is, the uniform expression is, 'Blessed be God,' and never, 'God be blessed.' The word *blessed* always stands first, and the word *God* after it with the article. . . . See Ps. 31, 21; 72, 18. 19; 51, 13; 68, 35; 89, 52; Gen. 9, 26; Ex. 18, 10, and a multitude of other examples. In all these and similar passages, the expression is, *Blessed be God*, or *Blessed be the Lord*, and never, *God blessed*, or, *Lord blessed*."

This being the case, it is altogether incredible that Paul, whose ear must have been perfectly familiar with this constantly recurring formula of praise, should, in this solitary instance, have departed from the established usage. This passage, therefore, cannot be considered as a doxology, or an ascription of praise to God, and rendered *God be blessed*, but must be taken as a declaration, *who is blessed*; see chap. 1, 25: 'The Creator, who is blessed for ever.' 2 Cor. 11, 31: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore.' See Matt. 21, 9; Luke 1, 68; 2 Cor. 1, 3; Eph. 1, 3; 1 Pet. 1, 3. In these and all other cases, where, as here, the copula is omitted, it is *εὐλογητός ὁ θεός*. Where the relative and verb are used, then it is not an exclamation but an affirmation, as Rom. 1, 25: *τὸν κτίσαντα, ὃς ἐστὶν εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.* 2 Cor. 11, 31: *ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ — ὁ ὢν εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*; and here: *Χριστός, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός, εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*. To separate this passage from the class to which it obviously belongs, and to make it a solitary exception, is to do violence to the text." (Comm. on Rom., p. 474.) — We close the discussion with the words of *Bengel*, quoted in Dr. Stoeckhardt's excellent *Commentary on Romans*: "Impense laetari debemus, quod in hac solenni descriptione Christus tam aperte Deus appellatur."

John 20, 28: *Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God!*

On the evening of His resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples. Thomas alone was absent. The disciples tell him: "We have seen the Lord." Say what they will it takes no effect. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Poor Thomas, his faith had vanished! Eight days later Christ again appears to His disciples, Thomas included. Overpowered by the majesty and grace of His Savior, Thomas cries out: "*My Lord and my God!*" — *ὁ κύριός μου, καὶ ὁ θεός μου*. Not only does he call Christ *God*, but *ὁ θεός*, the *one*, the *true* God, like as the Father.

—A clearer proof for the divinity of Christ is hardly imaginable. And yet rationalists have dared to lay violent hands even to this text. Thomas's confession, they assert, was merely an expression of surprise, an irrelevant cry of an astonished person! Is it not rather surprising what unbelievable lies unbelievers believe? These words of Thomas an expression of surprise! How unspeakably absurd! What brazen effrontery! Does not the text clearly read: "Thomas said *unto Him*"? If these words had been an exclamation of surprise, they would have been blasphemy, and Christ would not have been slow to rebuke Thomas sharply. No, Thomas speaks the truth: Christ is *ὁ θεός*. Christ has no reproof for Thomas (cf. Acts 14, 13—15; Rev. 22, 8. 9), hence He tacitly acknowledges: Thomas, thou hast spoken truly; I am God. Moreover, the Lord lauds this confession as an evidence of true faith, to which the erstwhile doubting, unbelieving disciple had now again attained. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast *believed*." Believed what? That Jesus is his Lord and his God. Christ wills His disciples to believe that He is *ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεός*.—And what was St. John's purpose in recording this incident also? It was in full keeping with the object for which he wrote the whole Gospel. Only two verses further on he says: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name," v. 30.

Luther's sermon on this text is grand. Two short extracts may find a place here:—

"There can be no forgiveness of sins nor salvation, where this article of the resurrection of Christ is not believed, because in it lies all power of faith and of eternal life; as St. Paul says 1 Cor. 15, 14. 17. 18: 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Jesus are perished.' Thither St. Thomas also wills to go, he wills not to be saved but to be lost, because he will not believe that Christ has risen from the dead. And in such unbelief he would have

been lost and damned, if Christ through this manifestation of Himself had not saved him therefrom." (St. L. ed. XI, 771.)

"This is the power of the resurrection of Christ that Thomas, formerly more stubborn in unbelief than all the rest, is suddenly changed into a different man, who now frankly confesses, not only that he believes the fact of Christ's resurrection, but becomes so illumined through the power of the resurrection of Christ that he now also most firmly believes and confesses that Christ, His Lord, is true God and man, through whom, as he has now been saved from unbelief, the fountain of all sin, so he will also be raised by Him on the last day from death, and live with Him in unspeakable glory and blessedness." (*Ibid.*, p. 777.)

Jer. 23, 6: *This is His name whereby He shall be called,*
THE LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Lord, *i. e.*, Jehovah, is the exalted name here attributed to Christ. To see the full force of this name as applied to Christ, we must inquire into the meaning of the term Jehovah. — God, appearing to Moses in the burning bush, commissioned him to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, to deliver them from the hands of Pharaoh, Ex. 3, 10. 11. Timidly Moses asks: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*); and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM (*ehyeh*) hath sent me unto you." — From the same root of which *Ehyeh* is formed, the proper names of the Deity *Jahve* or *Jehovah* are etymologically derived. Hence, in the very next verse God says to Moses: "Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, *Jehovah* (the Lord) . . . hath sent me unto you." Thus, from this revelation of Himself, we learn the authentic interpretation of the name *Jehovah* to be: "I am That I Am," or briefly, "I Am." Jehovah is the eternal I Am; Jehovah is

He that is and is and always is, He that is absolutely unchangeable, remaining through all eternity one and the same.

Whilst *Elohim*, another name of God (derived from ל , *El*, strength, power), is found principally in such passages where God is manifested in the plenitude of His power and strength as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Governor of the world, *Jehovah* is generally used to exhibit His relation to His people as their faithful God, their *covenant God*, as the God of their salvation, Ex. 3, 15.

The use of this exalted name, *Jehovah*, God has expressly reserved unto Himself. Ex. 3, 15 He says: "Jehovah . . . this is my name for ever." Is. 42, 8: "I am *Jehovah* (the Lord): that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." Is. 45, 5. 21: "I am *Jehovah* (the Lord), and there is none else, there is no God beside me." Ps. 83, 18: "Thou, whose name alone is *Jehovah*, art the most high over all the earth." But why multiply instances? The name *Jehovah*, as is evident from the passages quoted, is applicable to the one true God only, beside whom there is no other God; it is a name that God has strictly forbidden another to assume.

Now, this exalted name, applicable to "the Most High" only, is ascribed in our text to Christ. *Christ is Jehovah.* "This is His name whereby He shall be called, *Jehovah.*" Christ is *Jehovah*, is God, in the fullest sense of the word, without any limitation or restriction. Not even the faintest trace of a "delicate line of separation between Him and the Father" is discernible. Christ Himself says: "I and my Father are one" = ὃν , John 10, 30. "Before Abraham was, *I am,*" John 8, 58. Christ is the "I Am" = ἐγώ εἰμι . — And because Christ Himself is *Jehovah*, He is also our Righteousness. The righteousness we have in Him is perfect, one that availeth before God. Because this Lord *Jehovah* takes the place of sinners, "Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely," v. 6.

Springfield, Ill.

LOUIS WESSEL.

(To be continued.)