

by Professor W. B. Greene, Jr., D. D.

THE INTERNATIONAL LESSONS IN THEIR LITERARY SETTING—III.,

by Professor Willis J. Beecher, D. D.

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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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CONTINUING

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The Genesis Narratives— Points of General Agreement.

That upon many questions raised by the Genesis narratives there is at present great diversity of opinion, cannot be denied. Happily, despite this fact, there are certain points in reference to these narratives upon which there is practical unanimity. This latter fact is one of which we ought by no means to permit ourselves to lose sight. These points of general agreement ought, indeed, to give us our point of departure for all further study. Let us then briefly note them.

1st. It is agreed that *the controlling purpose of the writer of these Genesis narratives was religious*. His aim was not to give us detailed, much less scientific, information in regard to God's works. Just as little was he concerned to write a detailed narrative, and still less what would now be called a scientific history, of the race. His primary interests were strictly religious. He sought to teach men about God, to exhibit God's relations to His works and to His creature man, and to bring man into a right attitude of mind and heart towards God.

Those who lose sight of this fact

will hardly escape doing an injustice to the writer, as well as involving themselves in difficulties.

2d. Another point upon which there is, perhaps, equal unanimity is that *the writer's effort to minister to the religious enlightenment and betterment of his readers has been attended with marked success*. This is a proposition upon which, for lack of space, we cannot cite testimonies *in extenso*. Fortunately, it is not necessary. A single testimony from Dr. W. R. HARPER will answer every purpose. It is the more significant, coming as it does from one occupying Dr. HARPER's well known critical position. While freely questioning the historicity of the matter employed in the Genesis narratives, this distinguished scholar is unstinted in his praise of their moral and spiritual worth. Speaking specifically of the narratives in Genesis i.-ii., he says:

"Either of them has influenced human life more than all the historical records ever penned * * * As to their value as the medium for the conveyance of religious truth, let history speak. The statement made above is not an exaggeration. These stories have directly and indirectly influenced human life more than all the historic records ever penned."*

**The Biblical World*, February, 1894, p. 108.

principles: (1) Man has a right to hold property. (2) He holds it by tenure from Jehovah.

ZACCHAEUS—IS HE MISUNDERSTOOD?

REV. JOHN W. PRIMROSE, D. D., GREENVILLE, MISS.

It is assumed by most readers that Luke xix. 1-10 records the conversion of Zacchaeus. Is it not more probable that the passage is a unique and pleasing account of a convert's glad recognition of his Lord?

The facts are these: Jesus passing through Jericho, informs Zacchaeus, that he will lodge that night in his house. Zacchaeus received him joyfully. The crowd thereupon finds fault that: "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner"—a man who, though a Jew, yet fills the position of chief publican, or tax-collector for a foreign master. As such he is excommunicated. It is obvious that this murmur is impudently loudmouthed, and heard by both Jesus and Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus thereupon declares: "Behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." And Jesus said to him: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

It is assumed that this visit of Jesus resulted in the conversion of Zacchaeus. Why? Because the words of Jesus are taken as his declaration that Zacchaeus was saved that day; and, inasmuch as a truly converted man brings forth fruit meet for repentance, Zacchaeus is supposed to have given evidence of conversion just then realized, in his avowed purpose to repair wrong-doing thereafter.

But the recorded facts say nothing about a *purpose* of Zacchaeus. He does not say: "I shall give;" "I shall restore;" but "I give, I restore." The tense is present in the inspired Greek, and in the translation of both the Authorized and the Revised Versions. These renderings afford no countenance to the idea that the inspired authors were inexact in the use of their tenses. Says Winer (p. 264): "With regard to the tenses of the verb, New

Testament grammarians and expositors have been guilty of the greatest mistakes. In general the tenses were employed in the New Testament exactly in the same manner as in the Greek authors . . . No one of these tenses strictly and properly taken can stand for another, as commentators often would have us believe . . . Accordingly the *present* tense, which expresses present time in all its relations, is used only in appearance for the future, when an action still future is to be designated as good as already present, either because it is already firmly resolved upon or because it follows according to some unalterable law; as, Matt. xxvi. 2: 'Know that after two days *is* the Passover.' " Many commentators have taken it for granted that in the case of Zacchaeus, restitution is firmly resolved upon. How is it that Winer fails to cite a passage so conspicuous and so aptly illustrative of an exception to this rule, if this passage be an exception? Doubtless he did not see an exception. Neither does Godet, the eminent expositor recently deceased. In his commentary on this passage he says: "Most modern interpreters take the words of Zacchaeus as a vow inspired by his gratitude, for the grace which he has just received. 'Ἰδοὺ, *behold*, is taken to indicate a sudden resolution.' Take note of this resolution: From this moment I give . . . and I pledge myself to restore . . . But if the present *I give* may certainly apply to a gift which Zacchaeus makes at the instant, once for all, the present '*I restore four-fold*,' seems rather to designate a rule of conduct already admitted and long practised by him. It is unnatural to apply it to a measure which would relate only to some special case of injustice to be repaired in the future."

Let it be observed that nothing is said about the conversion of Zacchaeus. Hitherto Jesus has uttered no word except to invite himself to be Zacchaeus' guest. Not till after Zacchaeus says, "I give, I restore," does Jesus say anything about his being a son of Abraham. If he were converted at this interview, how is his conversion to be accounted for? No intelligent reader can hold that he was converted because of the resolution to undo wrong doing. On the contrary, a purpose of reformation is always consequent upon a change of heart. *No account is given of Zacchaeus' conversion.*

But does Jesus undoubtedly say that he is a converted man? Let us inquire. If He must be understood to say that Zacchaeus

was only then, during the recorded interview, converted, then "I give" and "I restore" express a purpose. If He is not to be so understood, then "I give" and "I restore" express a practice ensuing on conversion anterior to this interview. This view is maintained by Godet: Ἰδοὺ, *behold*, is in keeping with the unexpected revelation, so far as the public are concerned, of this rule of Zacchaeus, till then unknown by all, and which he now reveals, only to show the injustice of those murmurs with which the course of Jesus is met. "Thou hast not brought contempt on Thyself by accepting me as Thy host, publican though I am; and it is no illgotten gain with which I entertain Thee!" In this sense the *σταθεὶς δέ*, '*but he stood*,' is fully intelligible." This indignant outburst was occasioned by the contemptuous and malicious charge that Jesus was gone to be guest of a man who was a sinner. What more natural than that the man should rebut the slander by calling attention to his practice, not necessarily, "till then unknown to all, but which he now reveals," but a practice of bounteous charity, well known to all.

I repeat—no account of the conversion of Zacchaeus is given. Jesus is not reported as having said anything to Zacchaeus save only: "Make haste, and come down for to-day I must abide at thy house." It is contended that the words: "forasmuch as he is a son of Abraham," assert his conversion. So they do, if "son of Abraham" is to be taken in a spiritual sense. But even in that case they reveal nothing as to the time when he was converted. What he was then, he may have been for years.

If evidence there be that Zacchaeus was converted on this occasion, it must be found in the words: "This day (R. V. to-day) is salvation come to this house." Why *must* they mean that salvation as an experience has come to Zacchaeus? Is there no significance in the use of "house?" The word "house" is used both for household and for dwelling. They who insist that this passage points to the *conversion* of Zacchaeus, should go farther and find in it the conversion of his family. Why may not Jesus mean that salvation in his person has this day visited the literal house of Zacchaeus whose guest he is? Jesus had said, "To-day I must abide at thy house;" and being received into it, he now says: "To-day salvation has come to this house." Defilement could not come to Him from the house of the publican, but salvation in his

person did undoubtedly visit that house. Salvation is in Christ personally. Simeon said, when he looked on the infant Jesus: "Now Lord lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He was divinely assured that he should not die till he had seen the Christ, and when he saw Jesus he recognized in Him the Christ—the Lord's salvation. We know that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is *in* His Son. Said Isaiah: "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, for he also is become my salvation." Eternal life is the reward of righteousness, and Christ is made unto us of God righteousness and redemption. Long ago Jeremiah prophesied: "Behold the days come . . . that I will raise unto David a righteous branch . . . and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness"—xxiii. 5, 6.

That this is the most natural interpretation will appear if we consider why Jesus uttered these words. Zacchaeus had exculpated himself from the charge of being a sinner in the sense of extortioner and oppressor of God's people. What now does Jesus mean when He speaks, not to Zacchaeus alone, for He speaks of him in the third person? Does He mean to *excuse* Himself? Does He mean to exonerate Himself from the charge of eating and drinking as the guest of a sinner, by explaining that Zacchaeus is now a reformed man, and that therefore He Himself does not contract defilement? Does Jesus seek exculpation by pointing to the conversion of Zacchaeus as a consequence of His condescension and risk of defilement? The theory that Jesus is explaining to the crowd that Zacchaeus is now a saved man puts Him in a humiliating, apologetic attitude. It assumes too that the crowd of Jews had the same intelligent apprehension of what is meant by conversion and salvation as would a modern Christian audience. They were not looking for a Christ who would save their souls, but for a Christ who should proclaim Himself the Davidic heir to an earthly throne and deliver His people from their earthly foes. They would scout the idea of a renegade publican being accounted worthy of the Messiah's notice.

And when did Jesus ever apologize for intimacy with sinners? He does indeed majestically vindicate Himself, but not at all on the ground that Zacchaeus is converted. He says in effect: I come as a Saviour. I come to seek and to save the lost. My

personal ministry is for the circumcision. Personally I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Therefore in my person salvation came to this house when I entered it, forasmuch as this man, as well as yourselves, is a lineal son of Abraham.

Not only, then, is there no account of the conversion of Zacchaeus, but Jesus does not assert that he is converted. He says nothing about his conversion.

Nevertheless there is reason to believe that Zacchaeus is converted, whether his words "I give and I restore" are to be taken literally as pointing to his present charitable practices and restitutions, or whether as a resolve to do these things in the future. But that the literal interpretation is the correct one, and that therefore Zacchaeus is a convert prior to the visit of Jesus, is clear from the more than cordial reception of his self-invited guest. He received him "*joyfully*." A self-invited guest would not be joyfully entertained by an unfriendly or by an indifferent host, nor by one whose only interest in such guest was inspired by vulgar curiosity. Jesus was joyfully entertained by such friends as Mary and Martha, but not by such hosts as Simon the Pharisee. Tidings are good only to those who crave them. Jesus is joyfully received only by those who have learned to appreciate him. Only the hungry gladly receive the bread of life. And Jesus, who, we are expressly told, knew the hearts of all men, knew that this man's heart would be glad. Jesus recognized a friend.

We learn from the narrative that Zacchaeus was bent on seeing what manner of man Jesus was. It is highly improbable that Zacchaeus had not seen John the Baptist. Jericho is but a few miles from the Jordan. Among those who received John's baptism of repentance were many publicans, of whom Zacchaeus was probably chief at that time. The publicans asked John what they should do to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. He bade them: "Extort no more than that is appointed you."

That Zacchaeus was an earnest disciple of John is plain from the fact that he obeyed this very injunction, and in his honest zeal to make restitution for the past, exceeded far the demands of the Mosaic Law. As a disciple of John, Zacchaeus doubtless received Jesus as the Christ—the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. For this reason he is eager to see the Man, whom

as John's honest disciple he has received as the Messiah. It had never been his good fortune to meet him. When therefore Jesus so graciously spoke to him, and calling him by name, treated him as one treats an old friend, the heart of Zacchaeus bounded with joy. Joyfully he received the Master under his roof. When the crowd murmured, it was natural that he should stand forth and stoutly rebut the charge of extortion and oppression, for he would not have his distinguished guest to think meanly of His host. "It is my custom Lord to make ample recompense for any wrong of the past, and the half of my income I give to the poor."

And I—Jesus seems plainly to say—make no apology for being this man's guest. Defilement does not come to me, but salvation, in my person comes to this house, for my mission is to seek and save the children of Abraham, and a son of Abraham is he.

Jesus recognized in Zacchaeus an honest disciple, who like the saints of all ages, longed to see his Lord, what manner of man He is.

WHY WAS JOHN* CONVINCED, BY THE SIGHT OF THE GRAVE CLOTHES, THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN?

REV. P. P. FLOURNOY, D. D., BETHESDA, MD.

There was *something* about them which seemed to convince him that Christ had risen from the dead. The common explanation to the effect that Peter and John, on entering the vault, saw them folded and laid by, and from this felt sure that Christ had risen, and with leisurely care had laid the cerements of the grave in order before He left the tomb, has always seemed to me unnatural and wholly inadequate. Why should the well-ordered state of the grave clothes have convinced one, or both, of the disciples of the occurrence there of the most stupendous of miracles? Would the neat folding of the garments in which his body had

*According to the reading of the Syriac Palimpsest, discovered at Mount Sinai, Peter, also, was convinced by the sight of the linen cloths and the napkin. "They saw and believed," is the reading of this version, and it fits in remarkably well with the following sentence: "For as yet they knew not the scripture that He should rise from the dead."