

The Dawn of Conscience

By **REV. SAMUEL W. ZWEMER, D.D.**

Genesis 3:9—"And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him: 'Where Art Thou?'"

The common name for humanity in Arabic and other Semitic languages is Bni Adam. The grave of Eve is visited by Moslem pilgrims. Adami—a human being. This the oldest of all names and in a sense the most distinguished. Luke 3rd chapter. "The son of Adam the Son of God." All our ancestral trees go back to this root. We read the story of Adam's creation and fall and expulsion with deeper sympathy when we recall Paul's statement "As in Adam, all die."

The Negro "Spiritual" asks the question "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" And we may ask with still deeper significance "Were you there when Adam lost his paradise? When the angels drove him forth? Were you there? When God pronounced sentence of death? When He opened a door for repentance? Were you there?"

When Moses wrote this story, he himself had been banished out of Canaan for his sin, says Dr. Alexander Whyte, and "Therefore he dips his pen in an inkhorn of fears and describes it all with much sympathy." Note that this question of our text is the first in the Old Testament and is the key to the whole book. The first question in the New Testament is "Where is He?"

Let us pause to study these three facts: (1) Adam's sin and the dawn of conscience. (2) Adam's repentance and dawn of redemption. (3) Adam's death and dawn of the glory of the resurrection.

In the Bible Adam is not a myth, but a great reality. Paul builds on this one chapter of Genesis his greatest epistles and his doctrine of the Resurrection. Anthropology corroborates the fall. All nations have a tradition of Adam's sin and our share in it; for HEREDITY is the burden and the blight of all humanity. Milton's magnificent prologue to Paradise Lost tells the story, "Of man's first disobedience." That sin, as all other sin since his day has three characteristics; it produces in the sinner a three-

fold condition. Guilt before God—"hid himself." Pollution of conscience and sense of shame—"made aprons of fig-leaves." Bondage instead of freedom. Adam lays the blame on Eve. Such a threefold-cord is not easily broken—by any of us. We find it in all great literature. Tolstoi—Dostivssky—Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables." The Genesis narrative gives each of these elements its place. God created man in His own image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. But it became perverted, marred. (1) Knowledge of evil. (2) Lack of righteousness. (3) Pollution and Bondage.

When created Adam had a share of all the Divine attributes which the creature could share with the Creator. He was the crown of creation, the apex of all the works of God. O, what a fall was there when Adam fell! "Then you and I all of us fell down while bloody treason triumphed over us." It was the greatest tragedy of history!

Arch Bishop Whately calls this the greatest chapter in the Bible. Notice! It was God who first uttered the awful name of death. Adam's hand opened the gate and let him in, (yet 930 years reprieve!) "Dust thou art and to dust shalt thou return." Now the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. Behold! the first culprit in hand of the LAW. O, if Adam had only believed God about sin and death and not hearkened to the Tempter, nor listened to Eve. O, if Adam could have seen that other garden and the Son of God under the olive trees! If he could have seen the death-beds of all his children. "Ye shall not eat of it neither shall ye touch it lest ye die." Adam's sin weighed on Paul's conscience or he would never have written: "Wherefore as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . so by the obedience . . . "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned: Romans 5:12.

Three kinds of imputation according to Calvin: Adam's sin imputed to us; Our sins imputed to Christ; Christ's righteousness imputed to us. God's loving heart had compassion on Adam and on all mankind. We can appeal to His mercy:—Adam heard the voice of Jehovah walking in the Garden:— We can still hear Him:—

"Remembering man is but dust—
 Brother to fickle sand, and stubborn clod—
 The sport of every wind of earthly lust—
 Be merciful, O God!

Remembering all flesh is grass—
 Which is, today; tomorrow feeds the flame—
 And now sees only darkly, through a glass—
 Dear Lord, be slow to blame.

Remembering, as Adam's kin,
 We share his crime, his punishment, his loss—
 Consider, Lord, One guiltless of all sin . . .
 The crown of thorns . . . the cross!"

In this very chapter we have Adam's Repentance and our share in it. The dawn of Redemption. As in Adam, all die; so in Adam, all must repent. And Adam did repent. In Paul's conception, (as a quaint old commentator has it) "Adam and Christ stand out as the two Representative men—stand alone and unique with all humanity hanging at their girdles."

God's question: "Adam, where art thou?" The voice, not of a policeman with handcuffs, but of a brokenhearted Father. Luke 15th Chapter, "When he was yet . . . kissed Him." Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. It is an astonishing fact that the first evangelist was God Himself. The Gospel was first preached to Adam and Eve. Preached by word; and by symbol of a sacrament world-wide and age-long. "I will set enmity (not peace of compromise). The seed of the woman shall bruise . . . "Protevangelion." Genesis 3:14. Sacrifice of peace and forgiveness. Here the institution: "coats of skin." Delitsch and others find the great doctrine of atonement here in the germ. "Bring forth the best robe . . . rejoice for this my son."

Hear what Melancton says: "In his 'Postilla' for the first Sunday in Advent he reminds us that the first Advent of the Son of God took place in the Garden of Eden." "The divine Logos The Word or Son of God Himself addressed Adam in the giving of the promise: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head; and while these words were proclaimed outwardly, the Logos himself was working also within the hearts of Adam and Eve, and cheering them with His comfort, lest they should fall into ever-lasting death.

In after ages this Logos was always present in the Church, as Irenaeus truly says, He spake with the Fathers and was with them in their heaviest conflicts. He was with Noah in the Ark, with Abraham in exile, with Joseph in prison, with Daniel among the lions."

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday . . . How did Adam repent? Al Ghazali's, *The Moslem Theologian*, has a great chapter on repentance, in which he says it includes three: knowledge of sin, sorrow for sin, and forsaking of sin.

How we find all three in Adam. He went out of Paradise and walked softly all his days; He saw the death of Abel and the doom of Cain. He lived to taste death and the bitter remorse of sin many, many times before the nine hundred and thirty years of his life ended and he too died.

When did Adam die? Of what did Adam die? Who was present at the funeral of the Father of our race? Who knows the answer to all these questions? Yet we know he died and so death passed upon all men. God's sentence was pronounced in Paradise, but carried out not until 930 years afterward. For God did not deal with Adam according to his iniquity. Like as a Father pitieth his children so God pitied his first two children. For the mercy of the Lord endureth forever. When Adam was a great way off, his Father saw him and had compassion on him and ran out to meet him and fell on his neck and kissed him. They heard His voice in the Garden.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge. Our text recalls Cardinal Newman's greatest hymn, "Praise to the Holiest . . ."

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against their foe,
Should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence, and His very Self,
And essence all-Divine.

O generous love! that He, who smote
 In Man for man the foe,
 The double agony in Man
 For man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,
 And on the cross on high,
 Should teach His brethren, and inspire
 To suffer and to die.

O the length and the breadth and the height and the depth
 of God's love for Adam and for YOU. One of our American
 poets has caught the inspiration of this tragedy in a very modern
 but also a deeply significant poem: entitled

ADAM'S FUNERAL

At Adam's Funeral, his race
 Went softly, with averted face
 Bearing with awe, because they must,
 The red dust, back to the red dust.

Bewildered and sore amazed,
 Legions of angels gazed.
 To see the slow procession pass
 Over the windswept, short-lived, grass,
 Rounding the corner.

For close behind His dead,
 With lowly bending head,
 And weary feet that bled,
 Came the Chief Mourner.

O, softly, solemnly,
 Slowly and lovingly,
 Following, following,
 Over the sod;
 Following mournfully,
 Heartsore and drearily,
 Who could it ever be?
 Yes, it was God!

—FAY INCHFAWN.

For as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive.
 But each in his own order. The first Adam became a living soul.
 The last Adam a life-giving spirit . . . O death, where is thy vic-
 tory . . . John 3:16, For God so loved Adam. AMEN.

Winona Echoes

Notable Addresses Delivered at the
Forty-second Annual

Bible Conference



WINONA LAKE, INDIANA
August, 1936



Published by Authority of
WINONA LAKE INSTITUTIONS
Victor M. Hatfield, Publisher

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