

What Is Man?

“NEVERTHELESS man being in honour and abideth not is like..” as the Scriptures written under divine inspiration gives the understanding that except man lives up to the purpose for which God Almighty created him, he is good-for-nothing.

In the context of this treatise we are discoursing man as meaning a human being or person or the human race.

Among the creation of God on earth man is accorded a place of pre-eminence though he was the last to be created. After all other things had been made God said to His creative agent, the archangel, who later came to the earth and was known as Jesus Christ, thus: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” – Genesis 1: 26.

The Genesis account further states: *“So God created man in His own image, God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, all over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”* And God said, *“Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so”* – Genesis 1: 27-30.

Concerning man, The American Peoples Encyclopedia states: “He is distinguished from the image of other living creatures by a number of distinct features, among which is his larger and more efficient brain, which enables him to learn more effectively through experiences, to reason logically, and to create new ideas, and to use means other than his biological attributes for dealing with his environment. Man is capable of passing the results of his experience from one generation to the next and using the results of this cumulative experience, or culture, to improve his means of obtaining food, shelter, and other necessities, and to develop his artistic expressions.” (Vol. 12, Page 922)

Relationship

There is no doubt that God has a closer relationship with man than with all other creatures on earth. It is His purpose that man whom He made in His image and gave attributes such as wisdom, power, justice and love, should worship and praise Him. Said He: “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” -Isaiah 43: 21.

In order that man may be properly guided as to fulfil the purpose for which he was created, God gave him rules and principles to keep. The laws of God therefore, are of vital importance in the life of man. When the natural Jews had suffered severe hunger in the wilderness during their journey to Canaan, Moses, the prophet, told them that God had subjected them to that test so that He might make them know that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”.- Deuteronomy 8:- 2, 3; see also

Matthew 4: 4.

Writing about "Man's destiny", Dr. R. S. Wallace expressed this view: "In the Genesis account of creation; God, when He creates man, is regarded as taking up an attitude of deeper personal concern for him. God approaches man and addresses him as a 'thou', and man is made to respond to God's gracious word in personal love and trust. Only in this response, can man be what he truly is." (*The New Bible Dictionary, emphasis ours*).

But it is a pity that very many people are hopelessly ignorant of this plain truth that it is by man's response or obedience to God's gracious word that he can be what he truly is in God's order of things. Today people talk of the achievements of man in various fields of learning. The advance made in science and technology has brought about the invention of many things for the comfort, and pleasure- of man – though not without abuses.

These achievements, most of which are artificial, have led not a few men to be over- ambitious, and to develop a feeling of self-sufficiency with the result that they have no place for God in their thoughts and doings. A certain man, once said that he did not believe in God but that he believed in man and what man can do. Funny enough, people of such mentality are found mostly among those whom the world honours as "intellectuals". Their sport is blasphemy and desecration of holy things.

Vanity

No matter the height of man's greatness in knowledge, wealth, or might, he cannot do Without depending On God Almighty if he is to make the most of life. When a man is in power and thinks only of his material success and the extent of his influence over his fellow men, he sometimes becomes full of himself, inflated with pride and arrogance, and deceived in his heart as to have no recourse to God. But the end has always manifested the frailty and mortality (If man and justified the supremacy of the Most High in whose hands is the life of all mankind.

Let us take the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, for an example. There is no doubt that by human standards he was a great man. And Daniel the prophet told him that he had "grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth". But when he resorted to boasting of his power and achievement without acknowledging God, he was reduced to nothing "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men".-Daniel 4: 17, 22,28-33.

While Nebuchadnezzar was strutting and vaunting in his palace, a voice from heaven said to him: "The kingdom is departed from thee." And it added: "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. and giveth it to whomsoever He will."-Verses 31,32.

In that same hour Nebuchadnezzar lost all the faculties of a rational being and was made like a brute going on all fours. He "did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws".-Verse 33.

When the period of his punishment had expired God made him regain his senses and also the glory of his kingdom. It was at that time Nebuchadnezzar realised that human glory and greatness-minus God !– is nothing but vanity. As it is written: "And at the end of the days. I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me,

and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? ...Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose Works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.”—Daniel 4: 34-37.

Furthermore, we can also learn from the experience of king Herod who was notorious for persecuting the early Christians. He killed James the apostle and imprisoned St. Peter. Despite the fact that his people gave him extraordinary honour, God showed that his pomp and glory were counterfeit; and his end was miserable. Concerning him, it is written: “And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” -Acts 12: 21-23.

There is no cause at all for man to think above himself if he realises that he is nothing but dust. King David in his psalms declared: “LORD, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.” – Psalm 144: 3,4; see also Psalm 8: 3-4.

Man’s Life

The knowledge of God made His faithful worshippers of old understand the brevity ‘and vanity of human life; and it helped – them a great deal to contain themselves within the bounds of God’s judgments and laws with holy fear. David, the prophet and king, in one of his sober – and prayerful meditations considered the various aspects of man and the short span of man’s life on earth, which he compared to the breadth of four fingers, and arrived at the conclusion that man at his best-whether when he is young. and strong, handsome and full of health, or whether in wealth and honour – is vanity.

He said: “LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.” – Psalm 39: 3-8.

If only people will reason in the way David did and understand the emptiness of man, they will have cause to be sober and to humble themselves under the mighty hand of Jehovah, the Almighty God. From time to time in all of human history, God had allowed certain incidents, to take place so that man may know what really he is, and not over-exercise himself. But the pity of it is, that many people do not learn from such incidents as to behave responsibly in the fear of God.

Only a few days ago, a tragic accident of a plane crash in which all 87 persons on board lost their lives, occurred in Nigeria. Among the victims were people who fared well in life, men and women in the prime of their youth; but the means that they considered would afford them the best of comfort and make them reach their destination within the shortest time was the Instrument that

sent them to their graves. And it was reported that the Nigeria Airways VC-10 aircraft crashed three minutes before it was due to touch down at Ikeja airport, Lagos. What a tragedy! It was King Solomon who said: "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the bird's that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men soared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." (Ecclesiastes 9: 12) However, Christians have hope in the resurrection of the dead a'1d so we believe the VC-10-aircraft-crash victims shall rise in the resurrection of the dead.-John 5: 28, 29; Acts 24: 15.

The woes of man-sinful, mortal man-are manifold. Job stated: "Man that is born of a woman' is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

(Job. 14: 1.2) And St. Peter said: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever..."-1 Pet. 1: 24, 25.

King Solomon had a good understanding of the nature, physical characteristics and other aspects of man, and he wrote under inspiration: "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." – Ecclesiastes 3: 18-20.

Dignity However, what makes man better than the beasts is the fact that he is made in the image and likeness of God being a person endowed with divine qualities which have been corrupted through sin; and he also has the hope of resurrection through the promise of God which beasts do not have. It is when men have this knowledge and lead a life of holiness to the glory of God that they can retain the honour and dignity that is theirs; but where they do otherwise then they are like beasts that perish. – Psalm 49: 12,20.

It is our exhortation, therefore, that people should fear God and give glory to him. And what is more King Solomon also said: "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12: 13,14; see also Revelation 14: 6, 7.) Indeed, man without God is nothing but vanity -a hopeless entity-yes, he is like the beasts that perish!