

Our Object in Life

Anabaptist Statement, ca 1890

As we start out in life we are inclined to glory in worldly attainments, but we soon find that they do not yield us the enjoyment and satisfaction we desire. Disappointments mar our enjoyment, and kindred and friends passing from this world shows us the briefness and insecurity of this life, and should teach us that worldly things cannot afford us the perfect enjoyment and pure happiness we desire; and as it is our object in life to attain true enjoyment, we should be led to inquire into the principle underlying enjoyment, and the practical way and means of attaining this desirable end. Heaven, as defined by the scriptures, is a place of the perfect and eternal happiness which we desire. There is evidently a principle ruling and reigning in heaven which man by nature is destitute of. Unquestionably our first parents lost this principle by yielding to that influence which caused them to believe that the attainment of another object was of more value to them than the sweet communion and fellowship with their Maker, and the perfect and enjoyable condition in which they were created.

This influence or spirit of selfishness was cast out of heaven, because it was not content to keep its first estate, (Jude 6) in submission and subservience to God. In yielding to this influence our first parents also lost that principle which prompted obedience and subservience to their Maker; and history gives a woeful account of the wars and bloodshed, pain, misery and unhappiness resulting from man's desire to be subservient to no one, but to do as he pleased, and we see the result in sins, crimes and vices.

In heaven every cause of unhappiness is removed. Were this not so we could not attain the perfect happiness for which we long, and which we were undoubtedly created to enjoy. Heaven being the place of perfect joy and happiness, it is clear that if we possess the principle of heaven it will yield these desirable results, as certainly as the spirit of selfishness will yield misery and unhappiness; and when governed by the principle which rules and reigns in heaven we are in the kingdom of heaven.

Christ declares, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Before this birth or change can take place we must realize that we are not subjects of that kingdom, and that we are governed by an influence which is antagonistic to the principle of heaven, and which influence was cast out of that blissful realm because of its unhappy nature. God's perfect law and love should convince us that we are by nature thus governed and therefore unqualified for heaven and unable to abide in God's presence. This conviction should awaken us from our repose in sin, disgust us of vanity, and enable us to see in God and his attributes the only perfect and lovable object—the only object that is worthy of our highest admiration. When thus exercised we can accept the Saviour as the means whereby we can be restored to communion with God, and enabled to "love because he first loved us" in that lie "sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him." (I John, 4)

If thus constituted we will accept the Saviour with feelings of great unworthiness. If we rightly see our iniquities and depravity and that the consequences thereof would be eternal separation from God, heaven and happiness, were it not for Christ's mediatorial service, we will feel that it will require eternity to sufficiently praise our God for having favored us so highly. It is only thus that we can be qualified for the reception of the principle of heaven, and enabled to "love because God first loved us." When thus wrought upon we come into possession of the principle which our first

parents lost, and are prompted to submission and subservience to God; for we will feel to remain obedient to him as long as we remain in this lower world, as a token of regard and appreciation of the great and priceless gift bestowed upon us.

Earthly life and its conditions are well adapted to move us to become fitted for the kingdom of heaven. If the pain, misery and unpleasant features of this life are not sufficient to disgust us of the bondage of sin, and God's goodness in loving us does not move us to love, in turn, and accept his perfect and consistent means whereby we can attain and realize the perfect happiness and felicity which we were created to enjoy, then we may ask, Is there a condition of existence consistent with our free agency, that could induce or incite us to accept it? If these conditions are unavailing is it not the case that our unwillingness to deny self is preventing us from submitting to God's gracious appeals and to his invitation to return to him and again partake of the sweet and satisfying joys of Paradise?

If we are unwilling to enter the paradise of God, and choose to be under the dominion of the prince of darkness, can aught prevent us from going with Satan to perdition when the judgements of that great day will be revealed? when we will behold the avenue of immortality closed before us, and see that we have spent a lifetime in vain, rejecting the appeals and counsel of God, who would have had us avert the consequences which the course taken will have brought upon us? Then we may call to the hills and mountains to cover us and hide us from the presence of Him who sitteth upon the throne, but to whose just and righteous judgements every conscience will say, Amen.

If we yield to the convictions of grace, and our disposition is changed by being brought into possession of the principle our first parents lost, we will have the same spirit which prompted Christ's teachings, and we would do as he teaches, even if he had not given us commands. We are brought from bondage and constraint to liberty, and Christ's teachings become a standard whereby we can know our condition, and the motive or spirit that prompts us. His teachings are simple and plain, so we need not be mistaken, but when our actions do not agree therewith, we may unfailingly know that we are moved by a spirit or principle that will not qualify us for heaven. Christ declares: "The words which I speak shall judge men at the last day," and whatsoever he says or does will effectually and infallibly accomplish his purpose; and if we do not suffer that word to be our judge during the present life, we will surely be judged thereby at the last day, and the just compensation of our doings will then be meted out to us.

Will we then reject the true object in life, remaining in bondage, and enjoying the gratification of our carnal desires for a season, rather than submit to God's grace, and enjoy true liberty, peace and happiness? Do we not in reality make this unhappy choice if we do not suffer ourselves to be brought under the influence our first parents lost, which influence underlies all real happiness? Do not the mass of professing Christians virtually make this choice as long as their practice and teachings do not agree with the teachings of the Son of God? How can we conclude otherwise than that they do so, when their lives are not characterized by the meekness, humility and simplicity of Christ, but by gayety, pride and extravagance? When they treat his plain and simple words as though he meant the contrary from what he said? living in contention and teaching that it is proper to resist evil, when Christ teaches "resist not evil" and left such a striking example of passive submission to injustice and wrong?

The Apostle says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Christ's spirit was revealed by his conduct and teaching, which was a practical demonstration of the spirit of submission, humility and love that rules and reigns in heaven, and must rule and reign in us before we are able to attain that blissful abode, how can it be possible that anyone has the spirit of Christ, when his practice and conduct does not agree with Christ's teachings? and if he is none of his, how can he expect to share the blessings of heaven, which Christ has promised only to his followers?

How can the ministers of the popular churches lay a just claim to that heavenly heritage when they comfort their charge in false security? If they do not do this in word, they do in deed, by neglecting to labor with the erring, after the manner which Christ teaches, (Matt. 18) and which everyone who has Christ's spirit feels it his duty to do, by apprising his erring brother of his fault, and if he does not hear, finally bringing the united efforts of the church to assist in his recovery from the error of his way? We observe that they not only fail to thus discharge their Christian duties, but they justify their unscriptural and inconsistent course, and claim that unity on these vital principles is not necessary, and teach this in opposition to the teachings of Christ and his apostles, and to the spirit or principle on which fellowship, happiness and heaven is based.

Nothing, however, that they could do would avail anything, as long as they ignore the fundamental principle of true religion; and a soul influenced by divine love, cannot behold their fearful condition without feelings of sadness and compassion, and an earnest desire that they would heed the voice Which says, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils; therefore come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18) If this voice is not heeded, what course could be more charitable than withdrawing from their idolatrous worship, and from fellowship with them? and how can we do otherwise and have a conscience that will not accuse us at the great day of judgement? and if our conscience then accuses us, will we not certainly share the plagues of Babylon?

When we obey the convictions of grace, reprove the unfruitful works of darkness, and practically demonstrate our heavenly citizenship, we may be considered fools, and will, undoubtedly, have much to encounter from a gainsaying world, and, perhaps, from friends near and dear to us; more than all, Satan will present questions and temptations through the sinful humanity, with which we are still clothed for a season, and through which he would impede our progress Zionward. But so long as we remain humble, submissive and self-denying, Satan cannot harm us, however fierce his temptations may be. We will also learn that in all temptations which we are suffered to encounter, the Father displays a measure of his wisdom, power and love, which we cannot sufficiently admire, and therefore we will endeavor to be loyal and faithful, as a token of appreciation and regard, for the favors which he freely lavishes upon us; and we will, in adversity as well as in prosperity, repose confidence in him, because we enjoy him, knowing that if we remain submissive in our happy sphere, he will order the events of our life so as to yield us comfort and enjoyment here, and unalloyed felicity beyond the tomb. We will patiently await our deliverance from earthly trials, entertaining a holy fear that we may be robbed of our heavenly treasure—our principal concern being, to strengthen its security and ever be armed with the spiritual weapons, whereby we can be more than conquerors. And when we fail, we have a Mediator, through whom we can approach God's throne, with the promise and full assurance of restoration.

If we are of that number we cannot fail to be happy, because we are in possession of the principle on which happiness and heaven is based. We are then the subjects of Christ's peaceful kingdom, acting consistently as aliens and strangers in this world, being wayfaring men upon the way of holiness which the prophet Isaiah describes, where only the ransomed of the Lord shall walk, and shall "come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." What an appropriate object in life we have when we can honour God and enjoy him forever—enjoy him to such an extent that it will require eternity for us to honour and praise Him, and which feelings of adoration, of honour, of love, language utterly fails to express! Then we can truly exclaim, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory!

Anonomous