

## Back Page

### An Added Observation

In this issue of *Historicism* I point out that Christ's act of dying on the cross is the summing up or consummation of a life characterized throughout by an attitude of self-sacrifice. The cross brings to full completion all that had gone before. The events of Christ's life all pointed forward in some way to the cross. Below I would like to extend this thought further. The incarnation in its entirety is the summing up and ultimate expression of God's love for mankind.

Ellen White calls love "a high and holy principle."<sup>2</sup> God's love could certainly be described in this way. But more is involved than a desire to give, or whatever, because one does not give to himself. Giving implies a difference of persons. The principle I have in mind is that of making another's interests one's own. Thus, for example, Paul says, "He who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph 5:28). They are one through physical union but also in sharing the same goals and purposes. Before marriage one person's success is another's failure. If one wins, the other loses. After marriage when one succeeds the other succeeds as well. If one wins, both win. Or this is the way it ought to work.

Consider another illustration. My daughter, Heather Fawn, is now five years old. I have often knelt beside her bed pleading with God to protect her in life and lead her by His Spirit. She is too young to make such requests for herself. And so I have taken her place before God's throne, as it were. The request is my own, made on her behalf and in her stead. It is the nature of love to identify with another in this way. Any Christian parent should understand what I am saying here.

These examples are only a faint reflection of what Jesus did by becoming a man, making Himself literally one with us--"God with us" (Matt 1:23). Just as the cross is a natural expression of the direction toward which Christ's whole life was tending, so the fact that He was willing to live that life is a natural expression of God's inherent love for His creatures. He desires nothing but our good and works to achieve it. If the nature of man is flesh, the nature of God is love (see 1 John 4:8). Indeed, His act of creating mankind initially was already an expression of love even though the object of that love did not yet exist. And now also He loves when there is no reason to love other than that it is His nature to do so. We deserve no part of it. And yet in loving us He identifies Himself with us, taking our infirmities and carrying our sorrows (see Isa 53:4), making our interests in every way His own. This is the incarnation.

In the heavenly sanctuary we see all of these same principles at work. As our Mediator Christ takes our place before the Father's throne. The requests that He makes there are His own, made on our behalf and in our stead. And by asking in Jesus' name we are able to make our own requests as well. Here, in Jesus' high priestly ministry, is the natural corollary to both the incarnation and the cross. In the sanctuary Christ is man's Representative to God now just as He was God's Representative to man on earth long ago. Thus, God's work for mankind in all its varied aspects is a seamless whole, flowing at each point from the same principles, an organic unity in the person of Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup>See Hardy, "On the Nature of Holiness," p. 89 above.

<sup>2</sup>*Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1958), p. 176.