

Articles by Samuel Taylor

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Gaius and Diotrophes

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Samuel Taylor

John introduces himself in his third epistle as “the elder.” It is the work of elders to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5- 1-2), and to protect the sheep from “grievous wolves.” They watch over souls as those who must give account; in so doing, John the exemplary elder, directs Gaius and denounces Diotrophes.

Gaius was greatly beloved. Why? Because the wells whence the streams of love came to him were dug in the hearts of others with the spade of his own Christian love (v. 6).

The elder’s love for Gaius was not mere natural affection, but intelligent love, bestowed upon one who was worthy of esteem and affection. John’s love was fruit of the Spirit, and it was connected with “the truth” (v. 4).

Since this love is fruit of the Spirit, and since the Spirit is “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17), persons who “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16) also “walk in truth” (3 John 4), and persons who “walk in truth” also “walk in love” (Eph. 5:2). What manner of persons ought we to be?

Desire of the Elder (v. 2)

The words, “I wish above all things,” do not mean that John’s desire for Gaius was John’s supreme wish; rather, he wishes that “in all things” Gaius might prosper and be in health. Gaius was faithfully engaged in a noble work (vv. 5-8). To continue, he required material means

and good health; hence the prayer for a prosperity in proportion to his soul's prosperity.

(The lofty purpose of Gaius' hospitality was the furtherance of the truth. What a sad contrast to the proud purpose of Diotrophes!)

Delight of the Elder (v. 3)

Gaius possessed truth, and the truth possessed him; hence his spiritual prosperity. His condition was displayed in his conduct. He had truth, and he helped truth (vv. 3-8), and he "walked in love" (v. 6).

Other brethren bore witness to his truth; in this, the elder rejoiced greatly (v. 3). Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). The elder could not rejoice in the wickedness of Diotrophes, but he rejoiced greatly in the worthiness of Gaius.

The elder encouraged Gaius by telling him of the brethren's witness, and of his own reaction to their report. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

Declaration of the Elder (v. 4)

What John means by "my children" may be understood through 1 Cor. 4:15, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

John's children gave him great joy when he heard that they did walk in truth. The walk of Gaius produced an effect upon the elder, vastly different from that produced by the conduct of Diotrophes! "A wise son maketh a glad father" (Prov. 10:1).

Directions for Gaius (vv. 5-8)

Gaius' love was shown to the brethren, not as old friends, but as "strangers." Gaius did nothing by partiality (Cf. 1 Tim. 5:21). His work was in harmony with his character (v. 3). The truth controlled his heart, governed his life, and regulated his service.

Gaius was no servile puppet to Diotrophes; he was a willing bonds slave of our Lord Jesus Christ, serving faithfully and lovingly. He was faithful to God, the truth, and the brethren.

Those brethren whom he had helped, told the church of his love (v. 6). His hospitable home refreshed and encouraged the heralds of truth in their ministry. Gaius functioned according to the way of more surpassing excellence, the way of love (I Cor. 12:31).

The elder commended the Christ-like Gaius for his work; but a greater than John will say some day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

The elder also counsels Gaius, "Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort thou shalt do well" (v. 6). "Let us not lose heart in doing good: for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap" (Gal. 6:9).

Has any been stumbled by a Diotrophes? Look at Gaius, and follow his example. Also, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12:3). Remember Paul's testimony, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

The elder gives a reason for his directions, explaining that "for the Name have they gone forth, taking nothing of those of the nations" (v. 7).

Those true-hearted, self-sacrificing brethren did not go forth for “a name”, saying, “let us make us a name” (Gen. 11:4). They went forth for THE NAME, “which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9), to spread the truth enshrined in it, and connected with it (Cf. Acts 8:5, 35). Some rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name” (Acts 5:40).

Directions are given again, “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth” (v. 8). What a privilege and responsibility!

We should all be exercised by these weighty, searching words. God desires “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6); and “the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed” (1 Sam. 2:3). He says, “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:10).

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-22).

In ministering to those who spread the truth, we identify ourselves with the truth, and become fellow-workers in it. Gaius was a helper of the truth, but Diotrophes was a hinderer.

Denunciation of Diotrophes (vv. 9-10)

Diotrophes loved to have the pre-eminence in the church (v. 9). Twice only is “preeminence” used in the New Testament: in connection with our adorable Lord, and in connection with Diotrophes. The latter’s love of the first place shows how far removed he was from communion

with our Lord, and from the teaching of the Scriptures (Cf. Col. 1:18. Lk. 22:24-27).

He was a tyrannical leader, lording it over God's heritage. His name means "nourished by Jupiter," and the name fits the man. In Roman mythology, Jupiter was the chief of the gods. Among the planets, Jupiter is the largest!

A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package; such was Diotrophes. Paul, whose Roman name means "small," is an outstanding contrast; he was wrapped up in Christ and hence was a large bundle of fragrant Christian graces (Eph. 3:8. 2 Cor. 12:11. Phil. 1:21).

The lover of first place did not receive John and his associates. He even forbade those who would receive them, and cast them out of the church. Was his heart a den of jealousy, "the green-eyed monster" that is "cruel as the grave" (S.S. 8:6)?

The elder intends to call Diotrophes to account for his doings, "Wherefore if I come, I will remember (I will bring to remembrance) his deeds which he doeth" (v. 10).

His evil deeds included prating against John and others. He was making false accusations with malicious words and intense ill-will. The word for "malicious" is also used to describe Satan as the "wicked one" (1 John 2:13-14; 5:18).

From whence came his wicked speeches? "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the

abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Lk. 6:45). "Evil" is "malicious" in 3 John 10. Had the heart of Diotrophes been welling forth with a song of THE BELOVED (Eph. 1:6), he would have gladly received the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and his associates.

In writing against Diotrophes, John does not prate, nor does he write from an evil heart, but of necessity, from a good and honest heart, for a worthy purpose, and in a right spirit. (Cf. Prov. 4:24. 1 Pet. 3:8-13).

"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 11).

Great David's Greater Sin

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"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son Is He?"

Matthew 22:42

The Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ has various aspects. In Deity, He is the eternal Son; for God subsists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). He is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16-18), the Son of the Father (2 John 3), whose eternal dwelling place is "the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). In this aspect, "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. 11:27).

In Humanity also, our Lord is the Son of God. Before His virgin birth, Gabriel said to Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

He is also the Son of Man; this is possibly His favourite title, because He used it so often Himself. (It occurs about 81 times in the four Gospels). This title is employed in connection with matters of vast importance; but significantly, not in connection with the virgin birth. Its first occurrence in the New Testament is somewhat amazing: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20).

At the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew uses two titles involving son-ship; namely, "Son of David," and "Son of Abraham." However, "Son of Abraham" is used only

once, whereas “Son of David” is used several times by Matthew.

His Person

Jesus asked the Pharisees, “What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?” They replied “The Son of David.” He asked further, “How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?” (Matt. 22:41-46).

The Pharisees could not answer Him, but David’s Lord Himself provides the answer: “I Jesus ...am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16).

A root precedes that which it produces. The One who gave David being was before David, as He was before Abraham (John 8:58). He was before every being and thing. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

He became the “Offspring of David” by the miracle of incarnation. He came “of the seed of David, according to the flesh” (Rona. 1:3) by being born of the virgin, who was of the lineage of David. A. C. Gaebelien quotes an interesting Latin inscription that is said to be of first century origin; it represents the incarnate Son of God as saying, “I am what I was; that is, God. I was not what I am; that is, Man. I am now called both; that is, both God and Man.”

His Pedigree

The two genealogies of Jesus differ in certain respects; each is appropriate to the book in which it is placed. Matthew gives the royal line; hence David is designated “the king”. Luke calls him simply “David” (Matt. 1:6. Luke 3:31).

The genealogical roll in Matthew has three sections of equal length (Matt. 1:17). God is Three in One: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Three Persons in the unity of the Godhead are co-essential, co-eternal, and co-equal. Three has to do also with manifestation. Of Him it is written that, “He was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16); and again, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory” (John 2:11). Fulness, too, is symbolized by the number three; it is written that in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

Forty-two generations are recorded in this roll. They are given in three fourteens, equal to six sevens. Six is a number linked with man; seven speaks of completeness. Our Lord Jesus Christ is complete, proper Man — spirit, soul, and body. He is the perfect Man, the second Man, the last Adam, and the Son of Man.

In addition, three is a number connected with the resurrection of our Lord. It is as the risen Lord that He will occupy David’s throne (Acts 2:29-36). Possibly Christ the risen One is the fourteenth generation in the third section of Matthew’s roll. There are only thirteen names including “Jesus, who is called Christ,” but verse seventeen says, “Unto Christ, are fourteen generations.” On the cross hung the inscription, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Matt. 27:37); but in Acts 2:36, it

is written “That God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

In the lineage of Jesus, there is a blending of priestly, kingly, and prophetic characters. Aaron married Elisheba, the sister of Naashon (Ex. 6:23), who was “prince of the children of Judah” (1 Chron. 2:11. Matt. 1:5). Accordingly, Jesus’ ancestor, Boaz, had the prince of Judah for his paternal grandfather, and the high priest for his great uncle. How appropriate that Zechariah should write, “He shall be a Priest upon His throne” (Zech. 6:13)! Since David was a prophet as well as a king (Acts 2), the prophetic character is also present. Great David’s greater Son is Prophet, Priest, and King.

His Passion

Jesus, King of the Jews, was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. He came unto His own things as Israel’s Messiah and His own people, the Jews, received Him not. When Pilate asked if he should crucify their King, the chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

Even while on the cross, His royal claims were mocked. Jesus, the Just One, was betrayed and murdered (Acts 7:52), but never was God’s beloved Son more precious to the Father’s heart than when He was obediently fulfilling the Father’s will, while suffering upon the cross.

His Place

Him who was crucified, “God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). David “being

a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:30-31). This is He whom David called Lord, saying "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

He is Risen

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Our Lord's resurrection is a basic truth of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" and an integral part of God's gospel "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (Jude 3, R.V. 1 Cor. 15:4. Rom. 1:1-4). It is foreseen, foretold, and foreshadowed in the Old Testament; it is announced, accomplished, and attested in the New Testament (Acts 2:22-31. Heb. 11:19. Matt. 28:6. Acts 1:3). The Bible deals with this fundamental truth prophetically, typically, historically, doctrinally, evangelically, evidentially, and practically. It is woven into the very warp and woof of Holy Scripture. Our Lord Himself says, "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen" (Rev. 1:18).

The Father's Commandment

Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:17-18).

The word rendered "power" means "authority" and not merely "ability." Christ had authority as well as ability, and He exercised both according to the Father's commandment.

No creature has the right to deliberately terminate his own life; moreover, only the Creator is able to effect the

resurrection of a creature. As the Divine Word, Jesus was able to do both; thus He fulfilled the will of God that He should die and rise again, and thus He attracted afresh the love and praise of His Father.

The Father is always pleased with the faithful obedience of His children, and surely He could never be more pleased than He was with the devoted submission of the eternal Son who willingly laid down His life in order to take it up again in triumphant resurrection.

The Father's bosom is the eternal abiding place of the Son (John 1:18); hence, the eternal Father eternally loves the eternal Son. The Son, in devotion and obedience to the Father's will, laid down His life that He might take it again; this sacrificial act gave the Father a fresh motive for loving His incarnate Son.

The Father's Glory

"Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4).

As in our Saviour's virgin birth and sacrificial death, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all active in His glorious resurrection. Our Lord "rose," but He was also "raised" from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4. Acts 2:23-24).

When certain Jews asked Him for a sign, the Saviour replied, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up ... He spake of the temple of His body" (John 2:18-21). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Now, just as all the persons of the Godhead were active participants in the resurrection of Jesus, so also the

various attributes of the Deity were harmoniously displayed and gloriously exercised in the accomplishment of this unique conquest.

The Father's glory comprehends much more than His power alone, and this fulness of His glory, in all its aspects and components, was responsible for raising up Christ from the dead, whereby, as a consequence, the Father was still further glorified.

The Father's Throne

While still upon the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ had prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

That prayer is now answered. For forty days following His resurrection our Lord showed the reality of His resurrection; but then, at the end of that period, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" who had "raised Him from the dead" also "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20). There He says, "I ... am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21).

In His devoted obedience to the Father's commandment, He laid down His life in order to take it again, thus providing an occasion for the operation and manifestation of all the Father's glory, which He now shares on the Father's throne where He is seated in triumph at God's right hand.