



# **The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD**

by Adolph E. Knoch

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## *The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD*

### **PREFACE**

A stranger coming into Christendom would certainly deduce from the literature of the day that there are two great powers struggling for supremacy, one good, and one evil, and that the evil was not only uppermost at present, but would eternally prevail over the good. Only a feeble fraction would be saved from the clutches of the evil one.

A believer, however, may see by faith that, at present, the evil in the world is in accord with the Scriptures, and an essential ingredient in God's plan, and also the only way to the highest blessing for ourselves and for the human race, as well as all creation. May we prayerfully grasp the necessity of evil as a background for the display of God's grandest glories and our perpetual praise of Him. Only then will we be prepared to endure with thankful hearts all the trials and tragedies in the present which He sends to us.

All of mankind must learn to realize what God is to them by an actual experience of what it means to be without Him. Then they will be able to give Him the unforced outflow of their hearts. Then they will appreciate it when His judgments permanently right all wrongs and eliminate all evil, through the suffering Sacrifice He has provided.

The following treatise deals not only with the problem of evil, but also with so-called "responsibility" of man for his evil acts. The confusion of thought on this subject is due largely to lack of discrimination between our relations to God and our relationship to creatures like ourselves. By reasoning or inference the human element is carried over to the divine, because most men have no proper idea of the dignity due to the Deity.

The object of human justice is quite different from God's judgments. Men must protect society by removing objectionable members from it, either for a time, by imprisonment, or finally, by death. Divine judgment has an entirely different aim. It is to reveal God's righteousness, as a basis for His love, by placing a proper penalty on all injustice. A real difficulty here is our human view of the meaning of divine judgment. We are apt to look at it as punishment only, a penalty incurred by wrongdoing. But God's judgments are corrective; they set matters right. He deals with sinners during a short judgment period in order to prepare them perfectly for final endless association with their fellowmen and with Himself. The object of His judging is not to requite the sinner evil for evil, and make him suffer endlessly for his badness, but rather to correct him and remove all hindrances to enjoying His company. In many cases this may involve severe suffering, but, when compared with the benefits that spring from it, we are reminded of the *light* afflictions of the apostle Paul, which were very heavy, yet lost their weight when compared with the eonian glory to which they were the prelude. Indeed, Paul's glory was limited to the eons, while the reconciliation of God's enemies at the consummation will be endless.

Almost all of us are shortsighted. We see the judgments, but fail to recognize that they are only part of God's way with mankind, that they are definitely not the end. We confuse the going with the goal. Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it as a preparation toward a glorious consummation. No matter how an unbeliever is dealt with, whether he dies as a result of sin, or by the direct intervention of God, whether he be cast into outer darkness or into Gehenna, *this is not the end*. God does not reach His *goal* in any of His disciplinary measures. These only prepare His creatures for it. Hence let us not confuse the process with the end.

Even though God will hold no one “responsible” for his evil and wicked acts, all will give *account* of themselves at the two great crises of the eons. For the unbelievers it will take place at the great white throne, after the present earth has been swept away. There they will be judged according to their acts. Believers are warned in Romans 14:12, “Each one of us shall be giving account concerning himself to God,” for all of us shall be presented at the dais, commonly called “judgment seat.” This will happen between the evil and the good eons, for the saints in Israel in preparation for the millennium on earth, for the members of the body of Christ prior to their service in the celestial realms. In brief, *giving account* follows man’s present existence in humiliation and distress, and precedes his future life in glory and bliss.

Very little is said in the Scriptures about God’s goal until Paul completes the orbit of God’s Word with his later revelations. Hints there have always been by which hearts in tune with God have been filled with high hopes. But it is not until the meridian sun of God’s grace has come from behind the clouds of sin and law, to reveal the deepest recesses of God’s immanent love to the most undeserving of the human race, it is not until the truth for the present was made known that God tore aside the veil of the future completely, and gave us a clear and unclouded view of His ultimate goal. Once we revel in this, all previous revelation on this theme will be like the curtain of the tabernacle which seems to hide, rather than reveal the full blaze of the Shekinah glory.

The articles of this treatise on the problems of evil, judgment, and accountability, were written during a period of twenty-five years and were originally published in our bimonthly magazine *Unsearchable Riches*.

## *The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD*

### *Part 1 - Chapter 1*

# Evil and Sin

THE basic truth of divine revelation, that *all is of God* (Rom. 11:36) is so severe a strain on the faith of some of God's saints, that they instinctively reject it, excusing their unfaith on the ground that it is repulsive to their spiritual natures. They seek to shelve it by making the devil the source of all evil, yet they fail to tell us how the enemy could originate it, unless the power or capacity were given him by his Creator.

We sympathize heartily with the motive of those who shrink from associating evil with God, because we find that their conception of evil and sin is such that they cannot believe God's plain statements concerning them, but must modify God's Word to suit their misconception. There is dire need, therefore, of further searching of God's Word on this subject.

There are many passages in God's Word which bear out the great truth that all things—the evil as well as the good—find their source in the one and only God, Who alone can originate. Whence are the sufferings of creation, the evil that has perplexed philosophers and confounded the wise? Paul writes that the creation was not subjected to vanity voluntarily. It had no will or choice in the matter. God is subjecting it against its will (Rom.8:21). And the reason is not far to seek. It is only temporary. It is in expectation. Our sufferings will lead to an overwhelming glory, for which these sufferings are essential. Creation is enslaved by corruption with a view to a liberty which can only be enjoyed by that which has tested its opposite.

There is one feature which is common to all opposition to this truth, and that is the failure to distinguish between *evil* and *sin*. We have quoted the words of Yahweh Himself, "I . . . create evil" (Isa.45:7), and immediately we are accused of teaching that God is the author of *sin*. Now we did not write the passage in Isaiah, nor is the prophet responsible. It is the word of Yahweh Himself, and He ought to know. Speaking of the physical creation, He challenges Job,

Where wast thou when I earth's foundations laid?  
Say, if thou know and understandest it!

Well might He say to those who deny His creation of evil, "Where were you when evil was created, since you know I had no hand in it?" We admire their zeal for God, but we deplore their denial of His words. What causes the confusion which leads to such dire misunderstanding? It lies largely, we believe, in the lack of discrimination. Instead of the Creator of evil being the Author of sin, we are sure that He *cannot sin*.

In the languages of revelation evil and sin are clearly distinguished by terms not in any way related to each other. Our translations are only partially consistent, so that there is some excuse for cloudy conceptions on these momentous themes. With very few exceptions (Job 24:21; Psalms 41:8; 111:11; Proverbs 12:21), the Hebrew word *rahgag* underlies the English rendering *evil*. A few of its renderings are, *break, displeasure, ill, effect, harm, hurt, mischief, punish, vex, wicked*. The adjective adds to these *adversity, bad, calamity, distress, grief, grievous, heavy, ill favored, misery, naught, noisome, sad, sore, sorrow, trouble, wretchedness, wrong*. It is evident that such diversity of translation will not aid us in forming a correct or concise conception of the real meaning of the term.

What is its exact import? This is best discovered in such passages as Psa.2:9, where it is rendered, *break*, or Dan.2: 40, also translated *break*. Perhaps our word *shatter* is its nearest equivalent. In Daniel it is used with the same force as the Chaldee *d'kak*, *break in pieces*, or *pulverize*. In the second Psalm it corresponds to *nahphatz*, which is rendered *dash in pieces*. In its literal root meaning it describes the effect of iron, the hardest of the common metals, when used to shatter and destroy.

It has no moral bias, such as we usually associate with it. In the passage quoted the evil is done by the hands of the Son of God. *He* shall deal out evil to the nations with a rod of iron when He comes again (Psa.2:9). The fourth kingdom that will be on earth at the time of the end will deal out evil to the other nations before it, in turn, is the object of His evil work (Dan. 2:40).

The adjective is used of the “ill favored” kine of Pharaoh’s dream (Gen.41:3-27). They were lean, no doubt, but what *moral* evil were they guilty of? The wonders done in Egypt were great and “*sore*,” or *evil* (Deut.6:22). Who doubts that the Lord Himself did this evil? Who would insist that it was morally wrong? The same is true of *all* the evil brought upon Israel in the land (Joshua 23:15; 1 Kings 9:9; Neh.13:18).

How firmly immorality is associated with evil by theologians is evident from their desire to shield God from all association with it. Our common translation quite correctly states that an *evil spirit from Yahweh* troubled Saul (1 Sam.16:14). Newberry changes this, in his margin, to a *sad* spirit! This literally shows the “sad” effect of the unfounded fallacy that evil is, in itself, tainted with sin. The evil spirit was not an emissary of Satan, but of God. Our translators have tried to hide this at times, as when, speaking of the waters of Jericho, they say “the water is *naught*” (2 Kings 2:19). It was *evil*.

Job had learned this simple lesson long before his testing. In answer to his wife’s reflection on God, he replied “What? Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” We can almost hear someone shout “Blasphemy!” when they read this. But the divine comment is, “In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2: 10). “Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?” (Lam.3:38).

The neutral character of evil is evident when both words are used together. Zimri “sinned in doing evil” (1 Kings 16:19). From this we may freely infer that evil is not necessarily sin.

The claim has been repeatedly made that, since evil is contrasted with peace, rather than good, it denotes *calamity* rather than “moral” evil. This method of discovering the meaning of a word is a good one, but, in this case, suffers from unskillful use. First we must be sure of the significance of the contrastive term. Then we must determine its real opposite. Moreover we must not base our conclusion on a solitary text, but upon all available occurrences. And, above all, we must not allow one instance to completely overrule the plain teaching of a multitude of others. All of these precautions are thrown to the winds when evil is denied to “moral” evil because it is the opposite of peace. “Peace,” in Hebrew, has a much wider range than in English. “Calamity” is not its antonym, even in English. Evil is seldom contrasted with peace, but often with “good,” which, it is allowed by all, gives it a universal range, to include all species of evil.

While evil and peace are in contrast a few times, evil and good are set over against each other often. The following are most of the occurrences:

Gen.2:9,17; 3:5,22; 24:50; 31:24,29; 44:4; Lev.27:10,12,14, 33; Num.13:19; 24:13; Deut.1:39; 30:15; 1 Sam.25:21; 2 Sam.13:22; 14:17; 19:35 (36); 1 Kings 3:9; 22:8,18; 2 Chron.18:7,17; Job 2: 10; Psa.34:14 (15); 35:12; 37:27; 38:20 (21); 52:3 (5); 109:5; Prov.14:19; 17:13; Ecc.12:14; Isa.5:20; Jer.18:20; 42:6; Lam.3:38; Amos 5:15; Micah 3:2.

If God intends us to understand “moral” evil when it is contrasted with “good,” here is evidence sufficient for anyone.

We are not trying to prove that God creates “moral” evil, but that the distinction is unfounded and futile. *The word evil has no “moral” bias.* It may or may not be wrong. Is it “moral” evil in the following passages, where it is coupled with *good*! “Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of Yahweh our God” (Jer.42:6). Moral evil is sin, and God does not demand that His people sin. Much will be gained if the term “moral” be discarded in this discussion, and “moral evil” be given its true name, *sin*.

Calamity usually heads the catalogue of evils that are not “moral.” Yet it is impossible to consider a single calamity which has not a moral effect. Take the recent Japanese earthquake. No one doubts that it was a divine infliction. And who can doubt its moral effect? Japan cannot strike back at God. If the destruction had been occasioned by some other nation, however, it would be considered one of the greatest wrongs ever perpetrated against a people. It was much worse than anything done in the great war, for they were given no warning and no chance to defend themselves. So that, in reality, the proposed distinction is not between various classes of evil, but that which is from the hand of God and that which is from the hand of man.

Perhaps the most notable and striking dissimilarity in the usage of *evil* and *sin* lies in their relation to sacrifice. Indeed, that blurred idea, which struggles so unsuccessfully to crystallize in such unscriptural expressions as “moral evil,” may be clearly conveyed in the question, Does evil require a sacrifice? A careful consideration of the hundreds of passages in which it occurs will lead to the startling conviction that it is never connected with the altar and the blood. The many occasions where God is said to do evil are, of course, as righteous and holy as all His acts must ever be. In the hundreds of cases where men do evil, the presumption is that the evil is also sin and this is pointed out on rare occasions (1 Kings 16:19). Nevertheless we have found no passage in which the evil, as such, is to be covered by sacrifice.

In convincing contrast to this, the student who will go over all the passages in which *sin* occurs, will find *sacrifice* and *sin* such close companions, that in scores of cases, in the feminine form, the word *sin* has been rendered *sin offering*. In Leviticus, *evil* is mentioned scarcely half a dozen times, and then mostly in the latter part, and never in connection with the sacrifices, while *sin* (including the rendering *sin offering*) occurs over a hundred times.

Never is there the slightest hint that *evil* must be expiated by an offering. This is necessary only when it is sinful. A striking sentence is found in the midst of one of the definitions of the so-called trespass or guilt offering—the very place where we would expect to see evil condemned. “If a soul swear pronouncing with his lips *to do evil or to do good*, whatsoever it be . . . then he shall be guilty . . .” (Lev.5:4).

Until not only the true significance, but the moral bias of our vocabulary agrees with the divine usage, we shall not be able to fathom such truths as the origin of evil and the source of sin. We have an innate repugnance, an instinctive abhorrence of any suggestion which seems to associate sin with God. So long as we think of evil as essentially sin the door is barred to an understanding of its introduction into the universe.

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, usually uses one of two different Greek words in rendering the Hebrew for *evil*. One is the element *-kak-* and its derivatives, which we render EVIL, and the common text translates *evil*, *wicked*, *harm*, *ill*, *bad*, *vex*, *hurt*, etc. This corresponds closely with the Hebrew in its usage. The other word is *-pon ʾr-*, literally MISERY-GUSH,

or *wicked*. This is usually translated *evil*, *wicked*, *iniquity*, etc. It carries with it a moral taint. Its contexts, associated with the word evil, have given the word the moral bias which has gradually spread until it seems to taint the acts of Yahweh Himself.

We may be sure, then, that evil, as spoken of in the Scriptures, is an act which shatters and demolishes and brings with it a train of trouble and distress. But it is neither right nor wrong in itself. This leads us to consider the subject of sin.

## **The Source Of Sin**

The success of our search for the source of sin will depend entirely on our apprehension of the divine definition of what it is. The Biblical mistranslation "sin is the transgression of the law" is clearly misleading, for sin reigned during the period which preceded the giving of the law (Rom.5). It should read "sin is lawlessness." Failure to conform to any standard is sin, whether it be the law of Moses or any other law, natural or revealed.

We are thankful that we are not called upon to give a philosophical disquisition on the ethics of sin, or to discover its essence in the scene in which we live. Our minds are too warped, our hearts too heavy with the harvest of sin, to catch a clear conception of its true nature. We are glad to turn to the fountain of all wisdom and find there a simple simile that presents a perfect picture of God's own apprehension of what is meant by sin.

In the fratricidal war between the tribe of Benjamin and Israel, the former mustered, among others, "seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at a hair breadth and not *sin*" (Judges 20:16). Our version says they could not *miss*, which is quite correct, yet how much is gained when we render it *sin*, as in hundreds of other passages! Indeed, we are inclined to think the translators *missed*, when they failed to translate the word consistently, for in so doing they covered up a delightfully descriptive and a most important definition.

*Sin* and *miss* are identical in meaning. Some months ago we had occasion to throw a stone over a certain branch of a tree. A cord was attached to the stone, for the object was to draw up an aerial for radio reception without climbing up to the perilous higher branches. We confess that we *sinned* many times before the task was accomplished. The cord would catch as the rock ascended; the rock went too high; it went to one side; it caught in the foliage. No matter what it did, each failure was a picturesque representation of the divine definition of sin.

Let us clear our mind of all side issues; let us forget the forms in which sin appears. It may seem gilded and glittering; it may seem sordid and sear; at its center it is the same. However it affects our feelings, it finds its essence in *failure*. As it is paraphrased in Paul's indictment of all mankind (Rom.3:23), "all sinned and *are wanting of the glory of God*." We have failed to reach the divine standard.

Unless this is clear it is useless to go further. We will surely stumble in our search for the source of sin unless we discard all human definitions and cling closely to the divine. Mature reflection will fully confirm this conception. It does not deny that some sins are much more than a mere mistake. There is transgression, sin against a law, offense, sin against the feelings, but these are only aggravated forms of the central thought. When God charges all with sin, He does not insist that all are guilty of heinous offenses against law and decency and love, but that all are mistaken. Even their best efforts--their "good" deeds--are done in error. It is the broadness of this definition which is its strength. A sinner need do nothing that man may condemn to deserve his name, he only needs to fail to fully realize God's high standard of holiness and glory.

We now come to the crux of the whole matter. Since all things are of God, yet He cannot sin, how did sin originate? Whence did it come? And how?



All so-called "solutions" which trace sin up a blind alley and stop short of God are neither scriptural nor satisfactory. We know that sin came into the world *through* one human being, yet who would stop there? Sin did not *originate* in Adam. The serpent was in the garden before Adam sinned.

Neither is it enough to go beyond Adam and quote "sin is of the devil," or Slanderer, for the Slanderer, just as much as Adam, is a *creature*, and, as such, originated nothing. He was made a Slanderer in the beginning, or it was dormant in him from his creation, or he was influenced from without after his creation. There must be an adequate cause for every effect. We only condemn ourselves as theological evolutionists when we trace sin back to a creature and refuse to acknowledge the Creator. Many who do not spare the shortsightedness of science and condemn its labored efforts to banish God from His own universe, are practicing the same deception when confronted with the origin of sin.

The subject of Satan will be taken up in another study. Meanwhile we will simply state our conviction that current Miltonian effusions regarding his primeval perfection and his subsequent fall are not to be found anywhere in the Word of God. "The Slanderer is sinning, from the beginning" (1 John 3:8). We ourselves were infected with the virus of tradition and doubted this plain statement, but we humbly acknowledge our error. It makes no real difference to the course of our present discussion, but it is simpler to follow the lines of truth.

We have, then, a creature, called a Slanderer and Satan, and to him the Scriptures trace back all sin. Our inquiry is now narrowed down to the question whether this one is really a creature, or self-created--in fact, another god, such as the Zoroastrian religion worshiped. If he is not self-existent we are shut up to his creation by the hand of God. If we allow that God created Satan (as such), the crucial question arises, *Did God sin in creating the Slanderer?* The answer will depend entirely upon the object He had in view. Was it God's will that sin should invade the universe or was it due to an error on His part? Remembering our definition of sin, we must be prepared to say that God has sinned, if the entrance of sin was a mistake.

If God created Satan perfect and his defection was a surprise and a disappointment to God, then there is no use in hiding behind mere words. He failed. He started out to make a flawless creature who turned out bad. There is no one else to charge with this failure but God. But this is all wrong, for God never fails, or sins.

Sin has an essential, though transient, part in God's purpose. God made due preparation for it before it came. The Lamb was slain from the disruption of the world. Creation may reveal some aspects of God's power and wisdom, but His love can be displayed only where sin has sown the seeds of hate. There can be no Saviour apart from sin. There can be no reconciliation apart from enmity. God locks up all in stubbornness in order that He may be merciful to all.

Shall God's affections remain forever pent up in His own bosom? Shall He never taste the sweet response of love? Then all He needs is a perfect universe, where His creatures have no need of Him and His gracious ministrations. But if He wants the deep satisfaction of requited love, and desires to impart to His creatures the delicious sense of His fatherly affection, then there must be distance, distress and condemnation, to form the field for the exercise of His favor.

Since sin must enter this scene and play its part, since it is essential to God's purpose, and absolutely under His control; since it will eventually change the universe from cold, independent creatures into a loving family circle, and God from a distant Creator into an affectionate Father, it was by no means a mistake (or sin) on God's part when he created a creature who should not only sin but should scatter it in all creation.

We have now arrived at the heart of the problem. It was no mistake for God to create Satan, for the adversary did exactly what God had planned he should do. And the astonishing conclusion forces itself upon us that, the moment we try to shift the ultimate origin of sin to Satan, then we are making God a sinner! For, if God did not intend Satan to sin, but he did it on his own initiative, then God missed the mark!

We have been accused of making God "the author of sin," whatever that may mean. In no such vague and uncertain terms we say with all kindness that those who introduce sin into the universe as an excrescence, an unforeseen calamity, an irremediable blot, *they* are charging God with failure, *which is sin*. Or if they introduce it surreptitiously, without God's act, making Satan sovereign in sin, then God's failure has been the greatest of all sins.

We cannot believe that God ever fails or sins. It is only by acknowledging that He created Satan to sin that we can possibly clear Him from its stain. Sin is not a theory. It is a sad, a terrible, a tremendous fact. I pity the despair of those who are mentally equal to the consequences, if it has broken loose from the hands of God or never was under His control. Their highest hope is chaos. Their only reasonable consummation is eternal torment, not only for all, believers as well as unbelievers, and the hosts of heaven, but for God Himself, for love always suffers with its object. The only Scriptural, the only rational, the only true solution, lies in the acceptance of God's grand dictum that *all* is out of Him, and *through* Him and *for* Him.

The Scriptures are not so squeamish on this subject as its self-constituted defenders. Jehovah says boldly in Isaiah 54:16 (A.V.) "*I created the waster to destroy.*" To waste, or corrupt, is not simply evil. It is sin. Jehovah does not claim to *do* it, but to create the one who does. If the corrupter were created by another, or self-existent, then he would be out of hand, and Jehovah could not guarantee immunity to His people, or control the evil and harness it to His purpose.

Some will ask, what Scripture have you for the statement that God created Satan, as such. The very question is proof of the darkness into which we have drifted. What Scripture have you, that God created *you*? There are innumerable objects in the physical and spiritual universe concerning which this might be asked, and in no case can we find that the particular object is specifically mentioned in God's Word. What a bulky tome it would be if such were the case! But we have the plain declaration that *all* came into being through the Word and apart from It nothing has come into being (John 1:3). Moreover "the universe was created in the Son of God, that in the heavens and that on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or sovereignties, or authorities" (Col.1:16). Satan is specifically included as the chief of the aerial jurisdiction.

It is a sad state of affairs when our thinking is more powerfully influenced by the pagan philosophies of the past than the living oracles which have been confided to us. A stranger coming into Christendom would certainly deduce from the literature of the day that there are two great powers struggling for the supremacy, one good, and one evil, and that the evil was not only uppermost, at present, but would eternally prevail over the good. Only a feeble fraction would be saved from his clutches. Any reasonable intelligent being could not help from deducing from this system of theology that there are, in reality, at least two gods, and that Christianity is an offspring of Zoroastrianism and kindred cults.

In our next we will deal with God's method of coping with sin. There are so many "theories of the atonement" that a fresh study, based on the true significance of sin, will be welcomed by many (Rom. 5:11 A.V.).

## *The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD*

### *Part 1 - Chapter 3*

# Sin For Sin

NOWHERE, perhaps, are man's theories and God's thoughts further apart than on the means of dealing with sin. This divergence is limited to theology, however, for in other walks of life man finds his ideas will not work, so reverts to the true and practical solution.

Man "atones" for misdeeds by good conduct. God demands another wrong to make a matter right. Let us admit that this seems so far wrong that few will even consider it. We have the proverb: "Two wrongs never make a right." Indeed, in man's moral ethics, uncontrolled by God, it *would* be a dangerous doctrine. For it is only when two wrongs are properly related to each other that they are mutually corrective.

Not long since I had a striking experience of how two mistakes may combine with a very happy effect. We were building an evangelistic van. Some one, unknown to me, jacked up one of the rear wheels. After the hardwood framework had been carefully set so as to be square and the posts perpendicular, the jack was found and taken away. Then the whole rear end leaned over to one side an inch or two. I tried hard to force the frame into position, but it had been securely bolted, and would not budge. After losing nearly a night's sleep over it, it suddenly occurred to me that the large swinging door would have a tendency to throw the posts out of perpendicular. On testing it out it was found that the weight of the door exactly counterbalanced the slant of the posts and made them perfectly plumb!

Here we have a practical example of a mistake and its justification. I acknowledge freely that it was my mistake to get the door post out of plumb, but I insist that I was justified by the outcome. Any carpenter or builder can appreciate the possibility of making such a mistake, but they do not issue instructions to make them, for their happy outcome is beyond human control.

In other spheres, however, the principle is recognized and applied. In all commercial transactions and in bookkeeping it would be exceedingly silly to try to correct a mistake by doing right. If a man is overcharged, he is not satisfied to be charged what is right on other items, but wants a rebate. This, of course, is essentially wrong, for it is a payment for nothing. A friend recently forgot to deduct ten dollars from the bill for printing the magazine. How is he going to make it right? By not doing it again? No, but by wrongly deducting it from the next bill.

God's earliest lesson in "atonement" or covering is full of significance. Adam had sinned. He tried to cover himself with fig leaves. He did not do another wrong to cover his first offense. But God is not satisfied. He sacrifices an innocent lamb to provide a covering. On what ground could we have justified Adam if he had taken the life of a lamb to clothe himself? But are we not doing this very thing every day? Creatures against whom no charge can be laid are slaughtered for peltries to provide our covering. The sin that brought the need of covering demands another wrong to provide it.

Sin and sacrifice are constant associates--far closer in the vocabulary of the original than any English version. In the fifth of second Corinthians many margins make "He made Him to be *sin*," "He made Him a *sin offering*," on the ground that, in the Hebrew the phrase *sin offering* is simply *sin*. Our translators have not always been clear in their own minds how to render it. Thus, when they had

always translated "for a sin offering," in the fourteenth verse of the fourth of Leviticus they suddenly change to "for the sin." Whether it is rendered "a young bullock for the sin," or "for a sin offering" may not seem to matter much until we see that it applies to the sacrifice of the bullock, not to the sin of the congregation.

But, some will say, how can a sacrifice to cover sin be itself a sin? The point we wish to press at present is that, in the inspired language of scripture, there is no other term for it, and were we speaking Hebrew, we must always refer to the sin offering as the "sin." Nor can we convince ourselves that this is merely accidental, a curious circumstance, without reason or significance. On the contrary, it points to the path of truth. Let us consider carefully just what the offering of a sacrifice involves. Is there any aspect in which it too partakes of the nature of a sin, or mistake?

Since the flood it has become necessary for mankind to slay animals for food. Occasionally it is right to kill some unfortunate animal to put it out of its misery. But what would we think of the farmer who deliberately chose a young bullock, a perfect specimen of its kind, and killed it for no other purpose than to burn it up? He would be called a fool, or worse, a criminal. It was wrong to take the bullock's life. It did not deserve death, and its death served no useful purpose. Such an act would surely be a mistake, a sin. Yet this is precisely what the sacrifice for sin was, viewed apart from its sacred associations. Do we then wonder that it was called a sin by God Himself?

Let us consider the real nature of the sin offering, quite apart from those religious prejudices (which have no place in the Scriptures), which hamper our thought and chain our reason. The hunter who slays wantonly, for no other incentive than the lust to kill, justly forfeits the respect of mankind. Some may justify it as a sport, but who would consider the sacrifice of a young bullock in that light? Were the flesh or the skin needed or used for the support of human life, it might be condoned. But no. The only reason for its death is that its owner has done wrong!

Can the slaying of a perfect, inoffensive, useful creature be regarded in any sense as right? Does it compensate for the sin for which it is offered? Does it alleviate the loss of the one who suffers from the sin? From the human standpoint, apart from the illumination afforded by divine revelation, it was a huge mistake.

Propitiation, a shelter for sin, was by means of a sin [offering]. One mistake, contrary to the Divine precepts, was temporarily met and covered by another, which was in accord with His ritual. Does not this account for the fact that the bullock was not burned on the altar, in the sacred courts, but at a distance far from the divine dwelling, outside the camp? Being a "sin," it was brought far from the holy dwelling place of God and consumed with fire.

It was thus that Elisha healed the waters of Jericho. Being so near the salt sea leads us to suppose the waters alkaline and thus unfit for use. What is the remedy? Elisha cast salt into the water. This should have made it worse, but, by the divine alchemy, it cleared the waters. God's ways and man's are not the same. We would not commend salt as a purifier of water unless the Divine Chemist prescribed it. Neither would we advise anyone to sin, in order to cover a previous sin. Only God's will and wisdom can correct sin by sin.

The cross of Christ is the touchstone of truth. If we find that it confirms our faith we need have no fear of its falsity. But if it fails to confirm it, we may well view our theology with suspicion and distrust.

We now desire to consider the great crisis in the career of Christ entirely apart from all else but His dealings with God. Man's attitude and acts, and Satan's persecution we reserve for another time.

It is evident on the surface that the latter part of our Lord's ministry was weighted with His impending doom, which even caused a clash between Himself and one of His disciples. But it is not till we reach Gethsemane that the veil is torn aside and we get a glimpse of the awfulness of the cross as it affected His fellowship with God. Hitherto the will of Christ was in perfect parallel with that of His Father. True, He did not do His own will, but He acquiesced in the divine will cheerfully and with His whole heart. But now He begs that the cup pass from Him. His will was not at all in line with the will of God. But the will is not the final arbiter. The heart may furnish motives deeper and more powerful. So He adds "Not My will, but Thine, be done!"

We need not even ask the question whether He had a right to refuse to drink the cup which God had put to His lips. God Himself had opened the heavens and testified that He was delighted in His beloved Son. Christ had challenged any one to convict Him of sin and no one even dared to try. Pilate washed his hands of His case. Heaven and earth and the very demons declared His righteousness. There were no flaws in Him. Was it right, then, that He should suffer so severely that the very anticipation drew clots of blood from His agonized brow?

We are not now concerned with the physical pain and shame inflicted by men. How undeserved that was we shall see again. Men are ignorant, as He Himself declared when He prayed "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Men are unjust and hateful, so we have no difficulty in understanding their attitude toward the holy One of God.

We are now concerned only with those most mysterious and terrible of all His sufferings, the loss of fellowship, the averted face, the active hostility of God Himself, which wrung from Him the orphan cry "My God, My God, why didst *Thou* abandon Me?" The terror of those three hours of darkness, when the Sun of His life was hid from His soul, surpass the power of the pen, yet the psalmist compares it with the force of fire and water and the sword.

This was God's dealing with His Son. Our present question is, Was it right? Did Christ deserve such suffering? Was there any ground, in His relation with God, for the distance and despair which He endured? All will agree, even an infidel will concede, that, if any one ever deserved the opposite it was that lowly, holy Man. We are face to face, then, with this great truth, that God did visit with direst evil the dearest object in His universe. God does inflict evil even where no direct cause exists.

The fact that sin had invaded the universe is no reason why Christ should suffer. The penalty of sin applies to the sinner, not to the only One Who was not corrupted by its contact. We are now confining ourselves to a consideration of the justice of His case, and exclude all higher thoughts.

It will not destroy this truth to say that His case was exceptional and that the apparent wrong was justified by the results to mankind and the whole creation. This is most true. It is the very truth for which we contend. God uses evil to attain a higher good. It is the means He employs in turning His creatures from neutral indifference to an active and affectionate response to His love.

The attitude of God toward Christ on the cross is, in reality, a much deeper "problem" than the entrance of evil or sin. When evil came into the creation, creation was neutral--neither good nor bad. If it did not deserve evil, neither did it deserve good. Not so with our Lord. The glories He had before he emptied Himself to become a man entitled Him to respect and honor. The life He lived, the service He performed in His humiliation called forth praise and demanded a suitable reward. There was not the slightest cause in Him for divine condemnation.

If we are backward in acknowledging that evil came into the world in accord with God's purpose, what shall we say of His treatment of Christ? Christ did not want to drink the cup set before Him, yet this was God's will. The shame and indignity heaped upon Him during His ministry were not

deserved. We acknowledge that men were awfully wrong in their treatment of Him. What then, shall we say of God Who forsook Him in His deepest need, Who sent fire from above into His bones, and more than this, *delighted to crush Him!* (Isa.53:10). There was only one greater wrong in all the universe than that He should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and that was that His sorest affliction should come from the heart of His God and Father.

Let every one who imagines that God has no connection with evil listen to that lonely forlorn cry of the forsaken Son, "My God, My God, why didst *Thou* abandon Me?" In vindication we point to the infinitely blessed results flowing from it. We find that even the Sufferer Himself shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. And this is the answer which suffices for the first entrance of evil as well as for its foremost example.

Murder is an evil of the first degree. To take the life of an enemy is usually punishable with death. To take the life of a friend is far worse, and one who slays his own beloved ones is usually adjudged insane, for it is a crime too terrible for a rational being to commit. It is this thought which intrudes itself upon us when we read of the faith of Abraham, when he offered up his son Isaac. He doubtless felt the same as we do about it, for we know that he consoled himself with the thought that God, Who was in reality responsible for the apparent crime, could take care of its consequences, for He could rouse Isaac from the dead.

The chief interest for us lies, not in Abraham's deed, for he did not actually slay his son, but in the great antitype, when God and His Son came to Calvary. Then there was no substitute, but the Father's knife found its sheath in the Son Whom He loved, and in Whom all His hopes were centered. Our purpose in referring to it is to point out that, from every human standard, Abraham's intended act was insanely criminal. It was absolutely without justification apart from the revealed will of God. What had Isaac done to deserve death? And, infinitely more deserving as was the Son Whom he represented, why should He be slain? If we confine our inquiry to Christ and God, in their past relationships, and exclude the sin of man and creation and the benefits to come to all through His sacrifice, we must confess that it was a temporary wrong to the Victim. Is not this the thought underlying the statement that "He was made sin?" And this was for our sakes, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. No man made Him sin, and certainly Satan had no such laudable object in view. It was *God* Who did it, and to such purpose that it rectified and justified all other sins.

The prevalent conception of the perfected universe is one scarred and marred by sin. God's thought is infinitely higher. The cross of Christ has transmitted sin into righteousness, transgression into obedience, offense into reconciliation, hate into love.

Temporarily, during the earthly kingdom, sin is pardoned, offenses are forgiven. But eventually sin is justified, or vindicated. In itself it is criminal; in combination with the crime of the cross, it is an essential factor in the revelation of God's heart.

To capitulate: God settles sin by sin. Every sin is transmuted by the sin of sins into an act essential to God's highest glory and the creatures' greatest good. All the righteousness and glory and honor which are Christ's, either before His incarnation or after His glorification do not offset sin. His undeserved humiliation and distress and shame and death are sufficient to transform all sin into righteousness and holiness and bliss.

## **The Fall Of Satan**

THE fall of Satan is a fundamental factor in human and satanic theology. Like many another false notion, such as natural immortality, it is so vital to the spirit of error which pervades theology that no one seems to notice its absence from the pages of holy writ. It is blasphemy to deny it, though God has not spoken. But once we have our eyes opened to examine God's revelation on this point, we see that the blasphemy is against the god of this world, who has blinded the minds of men lest the illumination of the glory of God should shine into their hearts.

Satan's fall is only another and coarser form of Gnosticism, the "science, falsely so-called," against which the spirit of God has warned the saints. It is the old, old, attempt to relieve God of the responsibility of the creation as we know it, and to shift its shadows to the shoulders of His creatures. The Gnostics divided this responsibility among many, and thus dissipated the blame. Today it is concentrated on Satan, the Slanderer, who deceived our parents in Eden. It did not seem to suggest itself to the Gnostic that his scheme was not only unscriptural but unscientific as well; that is, contrary to reason as well as revelation. It shelved the problem rather than solved it. It does not occur to the defenders of this satanic falsehood that it is not only absent from God's word, but no real relief in answering the question which it covers. If Satan fell, we must account for his fall. If the impulse was from within, or if it came from without, it is this which is responsible. Where did it come from?

In speaking of Satan, or the Slanderer, it will be of considerable advantage if we drop the common term "devil." Satan is the Hebrew word for an *adversary*, and has not been corrupted by misuse. "Devil" is derived from the Greek *diabolos*, but it has been incurably corrupted by being applied to demons. *Diabolos* means *slanderer*. It is a common noun, and is applied to others besides the one who has it for a title. It has a definite and instructive significance, but "devil" has acquired a very different, though indefinite, meaning.

"That ancient serpent, the Slanderer and Satan" (Rev.20:2) is not known by name, but by descriptive, terms and titles. He is not the only adversary or the only slanderer, but he is the chief adversary of God and Christ, and the supreme Slanderer of God and man. He is the leader of the opposition in the divine government. It is his function to test and call in question, to thwart and to destroy every move made by God in His administration of the universe.

Let us suppose that Adam had been named "Sinner" instead of Adam. How would that have suited his circumstances before he fell? If we had no account of his transgression at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, would we not have the strongest kind of suspicion that his name was an index of his true character? Adam became entitled to the name sinner just as soon as he became what the name describes.

So with Satan, the Slanderer, the ancient serpent and the dragon of the end time. He has many appellations, but is there one which redeems his character? Is there one that intimates that he ever was anything but an adversary and a slanderer? The statement that the Slanderer is sinning from the beginning is self evident because he would not be a slanderer if he was not a sinner. He must have been called by some other title if he was once righteous. Such is not revealed.

There is a strong tendency to ignore the plain revelations concerning Satan and to form a blurred, composite picture by confusing him with every other evil spirit, as our translators have done in the case of demons. The motive that prompts this is palpably the desire to prove that he is an excrescence on God's creation, which has intruded contrary to God's purpose and will and in spite of every precaution. The first step in this propaganda is to prove that Satan was originally perfect, so that God is not at all responsible for his subsequent default.

The various attempts to explain the entrance of sin into the universe are all essentially the same. The modern systems, though indignantly repudiating any connection with Gnosticism because it is denounced in the Scriptures, are really only a fragment of it. The Gnostics introduced evil by gradations. They invented a series of angelic castes, the highest created nearly perfect, and each lower level less so, until sin reached man. In this way they attempted to exonerate God from the charge of committing a great sin, but fastened on Him the responsibility of the primeval peccadillo. Of course, *they* did not look at it in this way. *They* thought they were clearing Him of all implication with sin.

Modern systems are not so elaborate. Pointing to Gen.1:2, they assure us that Adam's fall was not the first. If we look back of Adam we find another "fall." Modern minds being more easily muddled than the acute thinkers of the early centuries, it does not seem necessary to invent still another, "fall" before that, and so on *ad infinitum*.

It reminds me of a label I once saw, which puzzled my youthful, inquiring, but stubborn mind for some time. On the label was a picture of the label itself. Of course, on the picture of the label there must be a picture of the label, and on the picture of the picture there must be--. So I got a microscope and found that the artist had settled my difficulties very easily. He just made a little blot for the picture of the picture. That is the way theology tries to settle the origin of sin! It first seeks to reduce it so that our perceptions are unable to follow and then if any one insists on using a microscope it makes a blot on God's character!

The principle is precisely the same as the "scientific" philosophy of evolution. First reduce everything to a mere speck of protoplasm and then--nothing! Men of God say rightly that it is foolish to reduce everything to a form for which there is no reason or evidence, merely to bludgeon our minds into the acceptance of a theory which it rejects when things are kept within the range of human perception. It is far more foolish for those whose minds have been enlightened by God's spirit to use a similar course in connection with evil and sin. The problem is not changed though we invent ever so many "falls," for which the Scriptures give no warrant.

Another point we must insist on if we are to be clear concerning these things. Not only do we read of no "fall" before Adam, *we never read of the "fall" of Adam*. Let no one mistake my meaning. That Adam sinned, transgressed, offended and became a dying creature with a variety of consequences is all too true. But God has never seen fit to use the term "fall" to denote the fact. Ordinarily we might overlook the use of a convenient term, but in this connection it is made the vehicle of obscure and unscriptural thoughts. Let any one try to transfer the facts and consequences of Adam's "fall" to Satan, and he will soon be convinced that it is merely a blanket to cover ignorance. A return to Scriptural language will shed light.

The real usefulness of the term "fall" lies in the unproven assumption that sin has always come from without, as in Adam's case, to a creature originally sinless. This would recoil on itself if it were carried to its logical conclusion. How many creatures in the chain suffered a "fall" and passed on the burden of sin makes no difference.



There was a first one. And we are driven to the horrible conclusion that God Himself must have played the role of serpent in the first instance! Should not this make us beware of embarking on this unscriptural and unreasonable philosophy?

If Satan fell, where is the evidence? The word "fall" is not used. The desperate need for some evidence is all that is proven by the appeal to passages which no sober student would have pressed into service otherwise.

The favorite passage for proving the original perfection and subsequent fall of Satan is found in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. The "king of Tyrus," we are told, is another name for the devil. His presence in Eden is perhaps the only fact which points that way. But this does not establish the identity of the serpent with the king of Tyre. We are never told that Satan was the only spirit who had access to the garden. Moreover, the creature in Ezekiel was perfect at that time, for surely it was not one of the glories of the king of Tyre to have been in that scene as the serpent, the adversary of God! This would put his "fall" subsequent to the great cataclysm of the second verse of Genesis, which, we are told, was a result of it.

The prince of Tyre is emphatically described as a *man*, a human being (Ezek.28:2,9). The king of Tyre was known among the people and his destruction was a matter of public astonishment. How can this apply to Satan? Those who have seen the ruins of Tyre and have some idea of its ancient magnificence will find nothing in this passage too wonderful to be accounted for. There is not the slightest hint that it concerns any one but the ruler of Tyre. If it involves the spiritual king of Tyre, corresponding with the "prince of Persia," the "prince of Grecia," or Michael, the prince of Israel (Dan.10:20,21) it is most unlikely that Satan should be assigned to a small kingdom like Tyre, or, indeed, any single kingdom, for he claims all kingdoms as his. Why should we give him such a subordinate place, simply to get a passage to prove that he once was perfect?

Moreover, it is always well to inquire what is intended by "perfect" in the Scriptures. The Greek has three words for "perfect," and the Hebrew uses it for about six. It is questionable whether it ever denotes sinlessness. Any other meaning would be of little value in this discussion. The word used in Ezekiel 28:15 is *tahmeem*, meaning *flawless*. The A. V. renders it *without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sincerely, sincerity, sound, without spot, undefiled, upright, uprightly, whole*. It is most often found of the animals used in sacrifice. Noah was "perfect" (Gen.6:9) in his generations. This certainly does not mean that he was sinless. David said, "I was also upright *perfect before Him*." Does this prove that David escaped the lot of all of Adam's descendants up to this time? It is evident that the meaning is limited to apparent flaws, not to innate tendencies. It is not a question of sinlessness.

The same word "perfect," is used in the passages which are usually adduced to prove that Satan was created sinless, such as "His work is perfect" (Deut.32:4), "As for God, His way is perfect" (2 Sam.22:31; Psa.18:30). It does not deny the great truth that all is of God. There is no flaw in the creation of a creature perfectly adapted to carry out a part of His purpose. Satan is as "perfect" in this sense as any of His creatures.

Still further, in the case of the Tyrian king, this perfection was in his *ways*, till iniquity was *found in* him. The iniquity did not come from without. It was in him while his ways were perfect, but undiscovered. This can easily be understood of a man, but cannot be applied to a sinless creature. Iniquity could not be *found in* such a one, for it is sure evidence that sin was already there.

Our ignorance of the spiritual forces of wickedness leads us to call them all "devils." Thus our version calls the demons "devils," and it is common to include Apollyon, the king of the monstrous

locusts and messenger of the abyss, and every evil power of the unseen world, as a "devil." There is only one Slanderer, and most of the minions of evil among the celestials are his messengers, as is seen under the figure of a dragon which drags a third of the heavenly host down with it.

Each kingdom or government of earth doubtless has a spiritual "prince" or overlord, under Satan's suzerainty. We have been delivered from the authority of darkness. But Satan himself is never limited to one land. His peculiar province seems to be the aerial jurisdiction. He is sovereign over all, as he was the first of all to oppose the government of God. He did not offer our Lord the kingdoms of Tyre and Babylon as a reward for worship, but all the kingdoms of the earth, for he was over all.

Were we considering the *end* of Satan instead of his beginning, the very same expositors would absolutely refuse to accept their own identification, for, in the Authorized Version rendering, his practical annihilation is tersely stated thus: "and never shalt thou be any more." Compare this with "The devil that deceived them...shall be tormented day, and night for ever and ever." Changing "for ever" to "the eons" does not help the identification. There is no point in Satan's career when he "shall not be." The nearest approach is the thousand-year period, when he is bound, but the fact that he will be loosed and lead the largest host of his career in his final defection after that, makes it impossible to apply this passage to the Slanderer. The true reading, for the eon (LXX) would teach that Satan is not alive today! The king of Tyre was judged in the sight of those who knew his glory.

The fact that such a passage should be pressed altogether out of its proper place assures us that the underlying motive is false. If Satan was sinless from the beginning a plain passage could be found, and a false one need not be distorted. Compare the words in Ezekiel with those of John. In one we read of the king of Tyre, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek.38:15). The apostle was inspired to write, "the Slanderer is sinning from the *beginning*." Suppose we falsely say "Adam was sinning from the beginning." "No! No!" we hear our readers exclaim. "He did not sin until Eve was tempted by Satan." What shall we believe, a fanciful inference, or God's absolute declaration?

A favorite refuge from the plain and apparent sense, that Satan was a sinner and murderer from the beginning, is the suggestion that this dates from the beginning of *man* rather than Satan himself. The fact that such a statement could not have such a sense if applied in any other connection shows how desperate and hopeless this argument is. Moreover, the same expositors insist that all the evidences of sin, such as the cataclysm of Gen.1:2 are due to Satan! They occurred long before man came on the scene. Satan was a sinner, according to their own teaching, ages before Adam's advent.

When was "the beginning?" As in the opening of John's evangel, the article *the* is absent. The conception of an absolute beginning is outside the range of human comprehension. We cannot look back to any definite point of time and say, "Nothing-- not even God--existed before this." So, in Scripture, the word *beginning* has the definite article--*the* beginning--when the context definitely decides what is in view. When the article is absent, as here, we would probably use the indefinite article, "as *a* beginning," or, when used of a person, the possessive pronoun, "his beginning." The "beginning" is always limited by the immediate context. Here this is finally fixed by the title used. So long as the Slanderer *was* a slanderer he was a sinner. This, we are told, was "from the beginning." No other deduction is possible but that sin began when he began.

Isaiah's description of the King of Babylon in the yet future day of Israel's restoration, is also taken as referring to Satan's fall in the past (Isa.14:3-20):

How art thou fallen from heaven,

O, Lucifer, son of the morning!

As this is still future, it can hardly refer to Satan's primeval "fall." At that time Satan will have been literally cast out from heaven (Rev.12:9, compare Luke 10:18). But these facts give us no license to identify the two. There will be a king of Babylon who will arrogate divine honors to himself and who will lord it over the kings of the nations, and who will shake kingdoms. Yet he is a *man* (Isa.14:16), and Satan is not a man.

Moreover, an examination of the Hebrew text, will convince any one that the evidence for the title "Lucifer" is exceedingly slight. It is precisely the same word as the translators rendered "howl" in Zech.11:2. In the feminine it occurs again in this very chapter, at the beginning of verse 31. In slightly different forms it is found in Isaiah ten times, and it is always rendered *howl* (13:6; 15:2,3; 16:7,7; 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14). There is no valid reason why Isaiah 14:12 should not be rendered, "Howl!" instead of "Lucifer." This name is a human invention, and should have no place in the Scriptures.

Are not these futile efforts to find a foundation for the primeval perfection of the devil a tacit admission that no actual evidence exists? More than that, are they not desperate devices to disprove the clear, unequivocal statements that the Slanderer is sinning *from the beginning* (1 John 3:8), was a man-killer *from the beginning* (John 8:44), and is not only a liar, but the *father* of it?.

Having disposed of passages which cannot be connected with Satan, it may be well to inquire whether we have not overlooked some which really have a bearing on his origin. We are perfectly safe so long as we keep to the titles given him in the Scripture-- Serpent, Slanderer, and Satan. Is there any suggestion as to who brought the serpent into existence?

In Job 26:13, we read,

His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

If this were the utterance of one of Job's friends, we might well beware, lest it be merely human philosophy, for the Lord said, "ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath" (Job 42:7).

Besides, we must be careful to check the translation of the vital expressions. The Revisers change "formed" to "pierced," yet the same word in 39:1 is left "the hinds do *calve*." There is more consistency between "form" and "calve" than "pierce" and "calve," yet the Revisers have made a change in the right direction. The Hebrew word *ghool* refers to the *travail* which accompanies birth (Isa.13:8; 23:4; 26:17; 54:1; 66:78). When Eliphaz used this word, the translators themselves rendered it, "the wicked man *travaileth with pain*" (Job 15:20) and the Revisers concur. This, it will be seen, is allied to both *forming* and *piercing*. How incongruous "pierce" is will be seen if we should render Deut.32:18, "thou hast forgotten God *that pierced thee*." They had forgotten the God Who had suffered in the travail of their birth.

Coming back, now, to the serpent, Job declares that

By His spirit He garnished the heavens;  
His hand has travailed with the fugitive serpent.

Note the contrast between the garnishing of the heavens by His *spirit* and the painful production of the serpent by His *hand*. The spirit is used of intimate and vital association, the hand holds its work at a distance and suggests power and skill, rather than communion.

The immediate application of these lines is, of course, to the material heavens. But no one who has studied the stars and their relation to holy writ, will fail to see a far deeper meaning. The stars are often used as figures of celestial powers, and in the ancient constellations, both Draconis and Serpens have always represented the Satan of Scripture. The Dragon's tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven (Rev.12:4). This does not prove that we have here the divine description of Satan's origin, but it is ever so much nearer a demonstration than the passages which are usually produced.

The Septuagint reads: Yet locks of heaven dread Him, and by an edict He puts to death the dragon apostate. We have not been able to reconcile this and the Hebrew text, which seems, in this case, to be superior, for the context seems to call for God's revelation of Himself in nature, past and present, not the future, which was not in evidence.

But there is one more link which will put the matter beyond question. Not only is the term *serpent* (Hebrew, *nahghahsh* the same as the name of Eve's tempter in Eden's garden (Gen.3:1,2,4, 13,14), but Isaiah describes it in precisely the same terms, the *fugitive serpent* (Isa.27:1):

In that day Jehovah with His sore and great and strong sword,  
Shall punish leviathan the fugitive serpent,  
Even leviathan that crooked serpent;  
And He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

The context clearly shows that this will be when the Lord comes to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity (Isa.26:21). Its connection with the twelfth chapter of the Unveiling is too close to deny. If Satan is that "ancient serpent" (Rev.20:2), how can we help identify him with Isaiah and Job and Genesis? All will acknowledge Genesis and Isaiah. As precisely the same name and descriptive term is used in Job as in Isaiah, the evidence is as conclusive as it can well be. The "fugitive serpent" of Job is the same as the "fugitive serpent" of Isaiah. The "fugitive" serpent of Job (A. V. "crooked") and Isaiah seems to refer to the constellation Serpens, for it flees from the grasp of Ophiuchus. The "crooked" serpent of Isaiah may be Draco (or Draconis), which winds its way among the northern stars.

The Unveiling and Isaiah give us his end, Genesis and Job give us his beginning. He is not introduced to us in the garden as an angel of light, though such he simulates today. He was seen as a *serpent*. Job gives us his origin. The One Who has garnished the heavens--*His* hand was pained with the travail of bringing forth the serpent.

It is well to seek for truth in its proper place. The judgment of Tyre and Babylon is no place to look for the origin of Satan. Job, however, is speaking of the creation of the universe and the manner of its making. God hangs the earth on nothing. The clouds and the sea are all displays of His power. Each couplet includes both good and evil. So, in the heavens, He it is Who made all. It is an elaboration of the great truth that all is of God (Rom.11:36).

We are now able to appreciate the peculiar term which has puzzled the translators, so that some render it *formed*, others, *pierced*. The woman was not the first to travail in pain because of sin. Jehovah travailed when Satan, was formed. Sin and pain appear together.

Satan is now *transformed* into an angel of light, and many of the Lord's own receive him as such. His ministers are ministers of righteousness, posing as the ministers of Christ. This deception is no

greater than his successful entrance into theology and enlistment of many great and grand servants of Christ, in proof that he actually was an angel of light at the first.

## **Satan's Supreme Sin**

PRACTICALLY all are agreed that sin is of the devil. We thoroughly believe this. But when we are asked to believe that God created a sinless being who, without any external or internal cause, becomes the father of all that is false, our reason revolts, and revelation refuses any foundation for faith. God says "the Slanderer is sinning from the beginning" (1 John 3:8).

Until we investigated the matter for ourselves we naturally fell into line with the thought that Satan was not a sinner at first, but became so later in his career. On examining the basis for this teaching we could not help noticing the dubious *character* and the *scarcity* of scriptural evidence to sustain it. All the plain passages are opposed to it. We must suppose, in each case, that God, when speaking of someone else, really intended us to understand that He meant Satan, though, for some inscrutable reason, He leaves it to imagination rather than faith.

However, it is not vital *when* he became a sinner, but *how*. A sinless creature would need some outside influence to cause him to go astray or he is not sinless. All the plain intimations of Scripture point to his sinning "from the beginning."

Compare his case with Adam's. Such perfection as Adam had did not allow him to sin, even when God was absent from the garden. It needed an outside influence to lead him astray.

Since sin thrives at a distance from God, it seems plausible to assign the origin of sin to a withdrawal of the divine presence. Yet this is not confirmed in the story of Adam's sin. Elohim seems to have been absent much of the time, yet there was no tendency to sin until the tempter appeared. Besides, the creation of a being that would automatically sin should He withdraw, followed by His withdrawal, is much like a man who sets off a charge of dynamite with a fuse. If he wrecks a building, his absence from the spot at the time of the explosion is no evidence that he did not blow it to pieces.

Sin *leads to* distance from God. Adam was driven out from the garden. Cain was sent forth from the place where the symbols of the divine presence still lingered. That is what sin is for. It is intended to produce enmity. But the creature does not leave the divine presence until *after* sin has come between them. Even if sin were the result of the divine withdrawal, that act is as definite and decided a factor in making the first sinner as a direct creation would be, and in no way absolves Him from the responsibility.

Since sin is essentially a mistake, it is possible for the devout spirit to trace the origin of sin back through Adam to the Slanderer and see how God can be the first and only Cause of all without the least taint upon His holy Name. In fact, both reason and revelation *compel* us to look back of Satan for the cause. Revelation says "All is of God." Reason says that if God did not contemplate creating a Satan, if the Slanderer is beyond the pale of His plans, then He has made the greatest of all mistakes.

In defining a sin as a mistake let it not be inferred that we are making light of it. Quite the contrary. This divine definition alone is broad enough in its scope to include in its range all sorts and conditions of sin. It alone includes the Pharisee as well as the outcast, the moral as well as the

immoral, the amiable as well as the vicious. The degree and character of sin is defined by other terms, such as *transgression*, *lawlessness*, and *offense*.

In accounting for evil and sin in the world, the popular method shifts all upon the devil. No one, we believe, will contend that the devil is self-existent. He was created by God. If he introduced evil and sin into the universe contrary to the purpose and plan of God, then God made a mistake in creating him. This is sin. Everyone who seeks to shield God from the effects of His own creation by transferring the blame to one of His creatures is effectually accomplishing the very thing which he is seeking to avoid. We need not fear to face the issue. God is well able to defend His own honor. If the original plan of the universe included no such enemy as Satan has turned out to be, if sin was a surprise for which no provision was originally made, then, indeed, God has sinned, or failed, in the fullest force of that word.

If, on the other hand, we take God at His word, that all is out of Him, and He is the Creator of the Slanderer, and that it was His purpose that this creature should not only sin but involve others in its toils, and that sin will be repudiated when its object has been accomplished--then, and then only can we rest in the assurance that God has not failed, or sinned.

That God had sin in view before it entered its destructive career is evident from the fact that He provided a sacrifice for it in advance. Why should He speak of the Lamb slain *from the disruption of the world* (Rev. 13:8, A. V., "foundation") unless, even before that time, He not only recognized, but actually purposed its existence?

The Jews had the shallow, superficial idea which always seems to prevail, that evil is only the result of sin. The book of Job was in their hands but not in their hearts. When our Lord saw a man blind from birth the disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" He answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but it is that the works of God may be manifested by it" (John 9:2,3).

The character of God does not demand that we cover the source of sin with a cloak, or run it back into a blind alley, or shift it to the shoulders of His creatures. Such evasions draw down suspicion and give no solid satisfaction. Once we see that His desire to reveal His affections demanded a foil, that sin is an essential part of His plan, then the creation of a creature to carry out that part of His purpose was no mistake, hence no sin. If the creature, thus created had failed in its function, *that* would have been a failure. The sin of the Slanderer is in itself a proof of the sinlessness of God.

The first intimation of the great clash between the Adversary and the Christ, God's Champion, is found in the forefront of revelation. Sin had hardly entered man's domain ere its exit was provided for. While the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, it would bruise His heel. The bruising of Messiah's heel is the first glimpse we get of the cross. It assures us that, inside the black curtain at Calvary, behind the hatred of men, was this sinister serpent that swayed their hearts as it did the mother of all living in the beginning.

Two of the evangelists give us an account of our Lord's trial by the Slanderer. After forty days of fasting, hunger itself would have furnished sufficient incentive for Him to provide Himself with bread. But the insinuation that His lack was a proof that He was not the Son of God fails to lead Him from the path of utter dependence on His Father. The same argument is often met with today. If God is our Father, why should we endure *any* evil? Why should His Son hunger? Because it is His beneficent will that we taste of evil, so that we may be able to enjoy the good.

To the reflective mind, the shadow cast on God's character by the creation of the Slanderer does not compare with the eclipse occasioned by His use of this instrument and His co-operation in carrying

out his opposition. The adversary could not touch Job, because God had kept him off. But at Satan's suggestion He deliberately breaks down Job's defenses, and sends Satan to do his worst to that righteous man.

And greater still is our wonder when we see His Holy One driven by the spirit into the wilderness to be tried by the Slanderer. The wilderness, the wild beasts, the forty days fast are all directly from the hand of God. They are all intended to break down His defenses in preparation for the assaults of the adversary.

When we consider Whence He came and Who He was, should we not shudder at such treatment? It was not merely that He had done no sin to deserve suffering, but that His real deserts were the very opposite of what He received. Not long since, heaven had opened to publicly proclaim Him His Father's delight. This is really a far deeper and more difficult side of God's connection with wrong than the introduction of sin at the first.

The next trial also finds its counterpart in the present discussion. Some would have us reason, If God uses evil to produce a greater good, why should not we also do the same? Some say that those who believe that God creates evil must also believe that we should do evil that good may come, the very thing which Paul condemns. Let us note, however, that Paul was accused of teaching this. There was that in his doctrine which might be misconstrued to mean this. We are in exactly the same position. We do *not* teach it, but there is that in our teaching which may be mistaken for it.

It would have been evil for our Lord to cast Himself from a wing of the temple. Apart from a miracle, or the intervention of messengers (to which He was entitled) He would have been severely bruised, if not killed. God does such things. He kills. He tries his creatures. Shall His creatures put Him on trial? That is the answer to those who see no difference between God's use of evil and man's. Man needs trial and testing. Hence evil is used by God. But it is only unbelief and disloyalty to do anything which calls *His* power or beneficence into question. We should not do evil, for we are not able to bring good out of it as God can.

The next trial was far more subtle. By right the kingdoms of the world and their glory belonged to Christ. He was entitled to this honor. Satan was offering Him what He deserved, and by so doing, insinuated that God was wrongfully withholding the reward which was so justly His. What an opportunity to reform the world and cure its ills! But He chose evil from the hand of God rather than good from the hands of the Slanderer.

This kind of trial is so common and so unsuspected that few of the Lord's servants have not yielded in measure to its influence. The desire to help their fellow men, to use the most promising course to promulgate His truth, to be of real use in His work, are a sufficient soporific to the consciences of those who are dismayed and discouraged at the prospect of a hard humiliating path in companionship with a God, Who, in the case of Christ, seemed to reward good with evil.

The subject we are considering is a pertinent example. How many will read these pages convinced that we have sounded the depths of truth, yet will shrink from the path its proclamation promises? Evil will intrude into the lives of all of us, unwanted and unwelcome. No path allures us which is shadowed by its presence. If a position of power and influence opens up we do not hasten to inquire who we have to thank for it, but rather rejoice in the prospect of accomplishing great things for God and man.

How often have we been saddened by the words, "If we should speak of these things the door of opportunity would be slammed in our faces." Our Lord was offered the greatest opportunity and the highest honor that has ever come to mortal man. The alternative was to be a Man of sorrows and



acquainted with grief, with the awful climax of the cross. Yet He took no time for consideration. He spurned the offer as an insult, and took up His despised and disappointing path.

When His proclamation of the kingdom came to the crisis when its rejection was no longer a question, He was cheered by the sympathy of His disciples, especially Peter, who boldly declared his belief that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. He then began to show them the awful tragedy which palled His path. Peter, all sympathy, would have none of that. And, can we not understand his thought? What had the Lord done to deserve such a death? God ought to give Him the kingdom, not the cross! But our Lord, recognizing the opposition to God's plans, and slander of His sympathies, does not hesitate to class Peter with the great Adversary himself. As in the trial in the wilderness, He flings from Him all thought of disloyalty to God's love, and uses the very words to His impetuous disciple that had driven away the Slanderer for a season. "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33; Luke 4:8).

The secret of Israel's rejection of their Messiah lay in His charge, "You are of your father, the Slanderer!" Unwittingly they were led on by the master mind that was foiled in its attempt to corrupt Christ before He commenced His ministry. Now that Satan has turned the nation against Him he plans his supreme sin--the murder of Messiah. He was a man-killer from the beginning. A man may be a murderer at heart long before he actually commits the deed. So Satan's act was the result of his character. It was always his aim to kill his Rival to the throne.

It was no accident which gave the name "Judas" to the betrayer of our Lord. That was also the name of the nation in His day, for they were largely of the tribe of Judah. Let us remember that both he and they were urged on by an unseen spirit force which they could not resist. Judas did not fulfill his fiendish design until Satan entered into him. The men who crucified our Lord were urged on by blind impulse. The intelligent, crafty plotting was done by the same one who led Eve into man's primal sin.

Satan is the sifter of the saints. Some seem to think that he cannot touch them and that one who falls into Satan's snare is lost. Such was not the case with Peter. To teach him a sober estimate of himself, the Lord deliberately allows Satan to sift the chaff out of him. So that we find the principal actors in the greatest of all tragedies, the cross of Christ, under the control of an unseen, sinister spirit, whose dark design they are compelled to execute.

Whoever wishes to have God's mind concerning sin, let him leave the lesser examples and study the sin of sins, the slaying of the Son of God. It reconciles all the contradictions that confuse us. Peter charged it to the Jews (Acts 2:36). It was the work of Satan (Gen.3:15). It was the pleasure of the Lord (Isa. 53:10). In a real sense it was of men, though they were the dupes of Satan. In a still more fundamental sense it was the supreme sin of Satan. Yet, in its absolute sense, it was God's act, planned before the perpetrators were even existent. Hence it was of God even though it was not of God.

The blessed truth which we wish to bring to light is this, that, when we consider the supreme sin of Satan, it will be found in perfect accord with the facts we have already gathered concerning sin's entrance. At Calvary Satan made his greatest mistake. *Yet this sin, in God's hands, is the corrective of all sin.* Satan, the supreme sinner, in his supreme act of sin, plays the part of the priest in slaying the Sacrifice that settles for all sin.

*Consciously* Satan was seeking to assassinate the Son. *Consciously* the men of Israel were planning to murder the Messiah. Their judgment must be based on this. But actually and absolutely they were carrying out the purpose of God. Behold the marvelous wisdom of God! Only One was consciously

doing His will. He prayed "Not My will, but Thine, be done!" Yet all the rest were carrying out His determinate counsel by their very opposition!

The cross is the great corrective that will eventually lead to the repudiation of sin. But it is far more than that. Being the deepest unfolding of divine love in the midst of the highest exhibition of human and Satanic hate, it not only does away with sin, but takes the fullest advantage of its operation for the revelation of God's love. All of Satan's subtlety and hate were focused at Calvary. Without it there would have been no cross, no shame, no ignominy. And without these we would still be serving an unknown divinity, and propitiating an angry God.

I have no excuse for Satan, no sympathy with his fearful offense, yet, at the same time, I am constrained to thank God from the very depths of my being for that most awful of all offenses, Satan's supremest sin. If we look about us and see the dark stream of sin which is carrying men on to destruction, we become confused and our philosophy fails to account for its place in God's purpose. But when we focus our gaze upon that great archetype of all sins, the cross of Christ, the dark clouds are riven asunder and a divine light falls upon the scene that settles our questions and satisfies our hearts and glorifies our God. We see how a single act may have many aspects, and that its moral character depends entirely on the relation it sustains to those engaged in it and to God's underlying purpose. At one and the same time it may be utterly antagonistic to God and yet fulfill the purpose of God. Those who commit it may be, in a secondary sense, decidedly *not* "of God" and yet the act itself be, in its deepest sense, absolutely and blessedly "of God."

## **The Knowledge Of Good**

BEFORE they sinned, Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good. Good lay all about them, unmixed with evil. Health, strength, honor, and companionship with one another and with God was their constant possession and privilege. Yet they knew nothing of the blessedness of these boons. This we learn from the name given to the tree which bore the forbidden fruit. To many minds it suggests only the knowledge of evil, rather than good. Yet, first and foremost, it was the tree of the knowledge of good.

Thus at the very forefront of revelation we have the principle suggested which is the key to unlock the great problems that most perplex us. It is this: All knowledge is relative: it is based on contrast. The knowledge of good is dependent upon the knowledge of evil. Hence the tree in the garden was not, as we usually think of it, merely the means of knowing evil, it was the means primarily, of the knowledge of *good*. Adam and Eve had good but did not realize it because they had had no experience of evil.

The perfection of Eden's garden was greatly lacking in the one element most dear to God's heart. Adam did not and could not apprehend God's goodness. There is not the slightest hint of Adam's appreciation or thanks, or worship or adoration. He received all as a matter of course and was quite incapable of discerning or responding even to that measure of divine love which lies on the surface of His goodness. If *we* should suddenly be transformed into glorious sinless beings and transported to such scenes of sylvan perfection, we would exult and praise the author of our bliss. Not so Adam. He knew no joy, for he knew no misery. He knew no good, for he knew no evil.

This point is most important, and we press it because it seems to be universally ignored and misrepresented. The garden of Eden has become a symbol of perfect bliss, we are always being reminded of its delights, and the happiness of the first pair has passed into a proverb. Yet there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Adam was delighted or enjoyed the bliss ascribed to him.

The mere possession of good does not give a knowledge or realization of it. Even today, when there is so much evil to contrast with the good, many do not appreciate their blessings until they lose them. Adam had perfect health, but what was that to one who never had even heard of disease? He had abundant food, but that was nothing to him, who had never felt a famine. Even pleasure had no appeal to one who had known no pain.

The fatal lack in all the perfection of Eden was the utter absence of any note of praise or thankfulness. Knowing no good, and utterly unacquainted with mercy or grace, Adam's heart was utterly incapable of love or adoration or worship. God's goodness did not receive the least response, because it was unknown. All that He had bestowed on Adam failed to kindle the affection for which He longed, and which is the goal of all His gifts.

How could this grave defect be remedied? There was but one way, and that way was, in the wisdom of God, provided by the tree which He placed in the midst of the garden. Had Adam and Eve known good they would have treasured God's goodness and never would have forfeited it by disobeying His command. Yet, when they did eat of the tree, they set in motion the very forces which would remedy the defect which caused them to do it. What divine wisdom do we see here displayed! God's

blessings being unappreciated, they offend Him by their deed and in so doing pave the way for an appreciation which satisfies both. Love is a marvelous schemer!

Shall we pause here to insist that this primal sin is the archetype of all succeeding acts of sin? We may not realize it now, but there can be no doubt on the part of those who have a mature knowledge of God that sin is now, as then, the fruit of the ignorance of good and evil and the lack of appreciation of God's gifts. Moreover, now, as then, sin itself, in the wisdom of God, sets in operation the very forces which lead to a knowledge of good and evil and the appreciation of God and His love.

Light, then, is nothing, were it not for darkness. Love is lost but for hate. Strength is unknown where there is no weakness. Wisdom leans on folly for its display.

Where is the glory of the stars at midday? Their light is not dimmed, but they have no darkness to reveal their splendor. And we would not appreciate even the sun were it not for clouds, and its daily disappearance. All things are known by contrast. Creature knowledge is not absolute.

God did not plant two trees, one for the knowledge of good and another for the knowledge of evil. In the nature of things these are dependent on one another, and neither can be known without the other. Let us bow to the divine wisdom which planted one tree, so that it was impossible to know good apart from the knowledge of evil.

Having in mind God's great purpose to fully engage the affection of all His creatures, it is evident that the prime ingredient of their response to His love is a knowledge of Him. The process of revealing God is the problem of the eons. If God should be always seeking to reveal Himself He would never succeed in His purpose. Indeed, if infinity were needed to make Him known, then His creatures would always be infinitely short of such knowledge. God never speaks to us in terms of infinity, for we cannot understand it. He has provided a definite period for self-revelation, called the eonian times. When these are past the process is complete, God is All in all, and all the factors (such as sin and evil) which are no longer needed, are discarded.

The great purpose of God during the eons is to provide a background for the display of His love. What would be the simplest plan to produce this? Shorn of details, all that is needed is that each of His creatures should have, according to his capacity, such an experience of evil and its fruits as will enable him to appreciate the good which God will provide after the eons are past.

Thus we have established the necessity and utility of evil in God's universe for the period of the eons. We will now consider the details of the divine operations in connection with the sinner. The groundwork of the plan is very simple. The sinner experiences evil that he may know good. He knows good that he may love God, the giver of good. The result is intensified by making the evil, not only calamities and misfortunes over which mankind has no control, but by making evil the result of the sinner's sins, and by hedging him in with law, leading to transgression, and by giving sin a quality which offends the feelings of God.

No one can, or will, object that God should be good to His creatures after the consummation--the real beginning of the perfected universe. But that goodness would all be lost on creatures who know no evil. Hence no one will question the justice of any plan for making that goodness effective by filling their hearts with gratitude to God, and in satisfying His heart by their response. So that God is just--far more than just--in sending each one of His creatures into a world of sin and sorrow, grief and pain, and in using any means which impresses upon them the lesson taught to our first parents in the garden. All must digest the knowledge of evil ere they can enjoy the knowledge of good.

The process through which God is putting mankind, in preparation for their place in the consummation, is very complex. We can best understand it by grasping first the grand outlines and leaving the dimmer details for later contemplation.

We have said that all that would be absolutely *necessary* for the realization of God's purpose would be the introduction of each of God's creatures into the sphere of unmixed evil for a limited time, away from God. Yet practical experience teaches us that such a method would demand a very long period and produce comparatively meager results. It lacks that great force which is the prime factor in the acquisition of all knowledge. Evil alone lacks contrast. It must be seen in the light of good. Wrong must be viewed in the presence of right. Hence the eonian existence of every man is divided into three stages characterized by destruction, judgment, and salvation. He glimpses evil in the world by the feeble flicker of conscience or human justice until it involves him in death. In resurrection he sees evil in the light of God's justice. In the consummation, he contrasts it with God's salvation. These three grades completely equip each one for the enjoyment of God's goodness and love.

It is necessary to pause at this point to vindicate God's justice in His dealings with those who are not saved until the consummation. If all mankind should die in sin and should stand before the great white throne to be judged and none saved until the consummation, the righteousness of God's way with them could readily be justified, on the grounds already set forth. The very nature of endless bliss is such that none can quaff the cup who have not drained the dregs of evil. Sin is an essential precursor and preparation for endless happiness.

But strong objection has been raised to the length and intensity of suffering as unwarranted and severe. This may be met in two ways. The difficulty depends upon an exaggerated, unscriptural impression of the length and terrors of judgment and a failure to see it in its proper proportion to the bliss to which it leads.

The happiness into which the eons usher mankind will be endless. While absolute infinity is practically outside the sphere of human knowledge, any mathematician can tell us something of its relative value in such a problem as that which is before us. We will, to fully cover every possible period of time, suppose that the sinner suffers during the whole course of the eons, though even Adam could not suffer so long, for he did not come on the scene until long after the commencement of the eons. And we will, for the sake of definiteness, give the eons a length of twenty-four thousand years. To us this seems interminable, yet, in comparison with the period after the eons, it is, literally, next to nothing. To God, a thousand years are as a day is to us, when it is past. To Him, the whole course of the eons is but as a month to us when it has gone by.

In the light of eternity, no period of suffering, whatever its limits, can be deemed excessive. But no sinner suffers for twenty-four thousand years. It is not at all probable that the average sinner will suffer for fifty years, including his life on earth and the judgment period. So that the period which we have reduced to zero, in comparison with infinity, is at least five thousand times too long. As, however, we cannot divide zero by five thousand to any advantage, we will let it rest at that.

We conclude, then, that the period of the sinner's sufferings, instead of being excessive is absurdly short in comparison with the boundlessness of bliss. In this degenerate age we connect all value with money. If an investment of a dollar should produce a million dollars no one would say the initial sum was excessive. Everyone would gladly pay it, even if the outcome were not absolutely assured. No one would question the right of it even if the dollar were lost. The *right* amount to receive for a dollar is about six cents a year, according to human standards. All above that is more than right.

We must acknowledge, then, that God is transcendently just in His dealings with all His creatures,

and that He would be warranted in making their term of suffering much longer without impairing His justice.

The severity of suffering is so varied that it is not wise to say much concerning it at this point. It belongs, rather, to the discussion of the degrees of judgment, and the varied glories of the elect. Yet we must not overlook a merciful provision which tempers the severity of sin. Evil makes men callous and obdurate. If they had the supremely sensitive nature which will be theirs in vivification for the enjoyment of good, the slightest touch of evil would make them shudder. Their loathing of sin would be unbearable. Now they almost enjoy, in a way, the bitter burden that they bear.

Were God to let mankind live in sin until they learn its lessons, it would take a long and weary life, and might never reach the desired result. Hence He guarded the way of the tree of life, lest Adam and his descendants should live on in the accumulating effects of sin. They would become old and decrepit, weak and blind, driveling and idiotic, and live on, a living corpse of corruption. Imagine what a sickening world this would be if all our progenitors still lived with all their constantly accumulating senility and disease! Can we not see the marvelous wisdom that provided that evil should make men mortal? Evil that results in death is sufficient to teach the lesson. Death is not only the result of sin. It is the intermission between one lesson and the next. It is the divine method of impressing upon the sinner the sinfulness of sin, and is the necessary prelude to the resurrection, which introduces the sinner into an actual experience of God's power and justice.

The judgment of the sinner at the great white throne deals with the evil with which he is acquainted in a twofold way. By contrast with the right its true nature becomes apparent. By a just sentence the evil itself will be counteracted. No one should confound judgment with "punishment," in its usual acceptance. Men "punish" in the crudest fashion, with the single thought of discouraging a future repetition of the act. A child is "punished" for poor lessons at school by being kept in at recess, when fresh air and exercise are the very correctives which are needed. We must not charge God with such silliness.

God's judgments, as are manifest from those that have already taken place, impose penalties which rectify the cause underlying the offense. Thus, Adam's offense was the result of his lack of appreciation of God's gifts. Flowers, fruit, and food fell into his hands without effort. Hence he is doomed to toil and discouragement in tilling the ground so that he may be duly thankful for God's sustaining love. This principle is always present in divine judgment. It is, in fact, inherent in the very term, for judgment is that which rights the wrong.

If this were not so, it would be difficult to account for God's motive in such a tremendous exhibition of power as is involved in the resurrection of the dead, and such a marvelous display of judicial force, in assigning their sentence. In each decision the sinner will gain such a knowledge of evil, by contrast with its corrective, as would be impossible in any other way. The judgment of his own sins and that of all the rest will be the school in which his knowledge of evil will immensely increase.

The final consummation of the knowledge of evil is always found in bringing it into close contact with the supremest form of good. The salvation of mankind at the consummation is the final lesson in good and evil. The lessons of the latter which have been learned by experience are now enforced by the realization of a good for which their sufferings have prepared them. The God Who had been their Creator and Judge now becomes their Saviour. They are ready to enjoy His love and give Him the response, which is the basis of eternal bliss. In this light we can see how God is just in dealing thus with His creatures, and His creatures are justified, eventually, as regards their sin.

Thus far we have kept to the most elementary principles in outlining God's dealings with mankind.

The subject of salvation has hardly been touched, especially the subject of eonian salvation, for the unbeliever has no salvation during the eons. His does not come until their close. Before taking up eonian ("everlasting" or "eternal") salvation, it will be necessary to inquire a little into the nature of the salvation of the unbeliever.

Our first inclination, when we learn of God's grand purpose to save all mankind (1 Tim.2:4), is to substitute their sufferings for those of Christ. We have been told that He bore our punishment, and we surmise that they have their own, hence need no Saviour.

But this is far from the truth. Judgment may correct the sinner, but it does not give him the power to undo his sins toward other men or toward God. The murderer may be taught the utmost horror of his crime, but he cannot restore the life he took. The blasphemer may have learned to abhor his sin, yet no amount of suffering on his part will efface his offense. If the judgment made it possible for all men to right their wrongs then it would not be followed by, or rather, include, the second death. Mankind fully learns the lesson of evil, yet in learning, finds itself the helpless victim of death. Indeed, this is the climax of evil. This, shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The sinner, though raised from the dead, finds that he is unfit to live, on the ground of justice.

Here is where the need for a Saviour arises. He needs to be One Who can do far more than bear the penalty of sin. If He had simply become a "substitute" for men and had taken their sins upon Him, then He must not only die, but, like the denizens of the second death, there could be no return to life except through another Saviour. Christ is no mere "substitute" to bear the "punishment" in "the room and stead" of the sinner. He died *for*, or on behalf of the sinner. He turns his sins into acts of righteousness. This is justification. He recalls the murderer's victim to life, restores what the thief has stolen, and harvests good from their evil.

Thus far we have confined ourselves to the contrast between good and evil, and the basic principle that both are necessary to the knowledge of either. The same principle of contrast is used over and over again in the complex process which prevails during the eonian times. As, in nature, power and passivity qualify the one universal substance so as to produce the infinite variety which we see in the world, so good and evil are used in endless combinations and contrasts to bring out the vast variety of God's wisdom and the limitless resources of His love.

All of the eons are characterized by the presence of evil, which was not ere they began and will not be once they end. Yet the eons themselves are divided into two classes, some of which are evil, while others are *comparatively* good. The next eon, in which the millennium occurs, holds evil in check, and the succeeding one, the last eon, segregates and banishes it. In contrast with these, the present eon and that one before the flood are evil eons. The secret of the difference is not far to find. In the former, Christ is absent, or, when present, is crucified. In the latter He is at the helm and evil is suppressed.

The question arises, how can God be absolutely impartial in His dealings with mankind when one person finds himself in Sodom and another has the privilege of hearing the Lord Himself? The answer to this lies in the equity which will characterize God's judgment throne. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the cities visited by our Lord during His earthly ministry. Judgment will be tempered by consideration of opportunity and circumstance.

The gravest problem, to some, is the fact that God, in His mercy and grace, selects some for eonian salvation, so that they do not enter the judgment at all. Is it just of Him to favor them and pass by others no more undeserving? Why should some sorry sot secure salvation and eonian glory when a pure and pious philanthropist (Christ unknown) passes on to judgment?

Even from the human side the *justice* of it is apparent. Shortsighted though we are, we must not let this contrast destroy the conclusion already established that, first of all, the philanthropist is not to be the subject of any injustice. In the judgment he will get his due deserts, and in such a fashion that he himself will acquiesce and acknowledge their equity. More than this, in the consummation, he will be unutterably thankful, in his measure, for the judgment of his pious sins. *He* will have no charge to bring against God in that day. Then why should we, with a beam in both our eyes, seek to remove a seeming speck in God's?

God is not satisfied, nor is it sufficient for His purpose to reveal the excessive depths of His love, to save all men at the consummation. The contrast is not great enough. The distinction is not sharp enough. Such a course would leave depths unexplored, recesses unrevealed. So He proposes to compare the good with the best. The righteousness of such a course is manifested by our Lord in His parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Right demands the payment of a just equivalent. Yet this does not debar God from *giving* freely when He chooses.

God will be more than just to *all*. It is only the lurking impression that He is not just to unbelievers the non-elect, which suggests that there is an element of partiality in His favor for the few. God, having provided for a full accounting with all His creatures, which is good, proposes to display the riches of His love, which is better, and for the exceeding riches of His affection, which is best. In fact, it is this last which has been His aim in all the rest, only it takes a pyramid of love to rear its highest pinnacle.

First of all, by what process does God save men now? Is it not, in essence, the very same process as that which will save the unbeliever in the future? They are brought into the presence of the great white throne and learn God's judgment on their sins. We are brought into His presence at Calvary and learn the same lesson through Him Who suffered there. No scene in all the universe of time or space will ever expose the hideousness of sin as does the cross of Christ. Even the great white throne with its exposure of the sins of myriads of mankind, will not equal it. We know what sin is, not merely by our own sad experience, but by the place it gave Him. He was the Highest of heaven. It made Him the lowest of earth. He was the life and the light of all. It put Him into the darkness of death. That pole on which He was nailed is the real tree where we may gain the knowledge of good and evil. Knowing that, what need is there for us to enter into judgment?

But the cross reveals far more than the judgment. The evil is eclipsed by the good. The vivid and appalling contrasts between the limitless love of God and the wretched wickedness of man makes it both the judgment and the consummation for all who gaze upon it. He is our Judge and our Saviour all at once, and we enter into a foretaste of this bliss which will finally embrace all.

In God's dispensational dealings we see the vast value of contrast, in order to pile up a pyramid to give expression to His grace. God did not call all nations, but chose one as the special object of His favor. With this as a background He turns to the despised aliens when His chosen people apostatize. By showing the highest honors to those who deserve the least, He has at last succeeded in producing an object lesson through which not only mankind, but the celestial spheres as well, may learn and luxuriate in the lavishness of His love.

God Himself planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden of Eden. As both were combined in a single tree, it was impossible for Adam to know good, apart from evil. The contrast between the two is the only means the creature has for the realization of God's goodness and the appreciation of His love. For this cause evil and sin have invaded the universe for a season. Their presence is appalling, but their stay is brief, and their ultimate effect, not only the knowledge



of good, but the enjoyment and adoration of the God of all good.

## **Man's Greatest Mistakes**

TWO great mistakes mar the course of mankind during the eons: Adam's offense in Eden and Israel's murder of Messiah on Golgotha. It is not our purpose to minimize either of these sins, but to get a fresh glimpse of them from the standpoint of God's purpose. We have looked too long at the human side of sin. It has blinded our eyes and hardened our hearts. We need to get God's thoughts concerning it. We need not shrink from associating Him with sin. His Son walked unsullied in the midst of its most sordid forms, yet it only heralded His holiness.

The oft-repeated question, "Could not God have prevented Adam's sin?" may be answered with an emphatic "Yes!" More than that, God could have created him incapable of Sin, but He did not only make it possible for him to offend, but impossible for him to do otherwise. Adam transgressed at the first test. We need have no hesitancy in believing that Adam, like all his posterity, was locked up in stubbornness, that he might come within the range of God's mercy (Rom.11:32).

With all reverence we must insist that, if it was God's purpose and intention to make Adam sin-proof, then not only Adam, but God Himself, has failed. If an inventor builds a machine which breaks at its first trial we do not hesitate to call him a failure. Furthermore, if the first attempt was so unfortunate, what ground have we to confide in His future efforts? It is a serious situation and resolves itself into this, that Adam fulfilled the underlying purpose of his Creator, or we have a God unworthy of the name.

That God could have a man able to stand, not merely the mild temptation of the garden, but the severest strain of sin, is convincingly exemplified in the case of Christ. Nay, here He had a Man able, not only to live unsullied in a scene of sordid sin, and suffer its presence in others, but to bow to the will of God and suffer the degradation and moral infamy consequent upon His taking the place of sin itself, and come through unstained and spotless in God's sight.

Had Adam never sinned he would have been a neutral, a sentient clod unfit for the full companionship of his Creator. Of one thing we may be sure. He would never have known evil. And we may be equally sure that he never would have known good. He would not curse God for sin, neither would he thank Him for His beneficence nor adore Him for His grace. He would have utterly failed to fulfill the purpose of His creation. We must always remember that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had a double function. No one forgets that it brought the knowledge of *evil*. But it was primarily the tree of the knowledge of *good*. Adam had no appreciation of the good by which he was surrounded. Having known nothing else, it was not good to him. He received it as a matter of course, without a thankful thought.

Adam could have lived on indefinitely in such an unappreciated paradise, but only with untold loss to himself and to his Creator. All that he saw was God's hand; His heart was veiled. Some means must be found to rouse Adam's affectionate response to the Divine yearnings. He must learn to appreciate good. How shall this be done?

It is a notable fact, and full of significance, that the tree of which Adam ate was no afterthought with God. Adam's ignorance of good did not lead to its planting. It was already grown and bearing fruit. Moreover, it was not hidden in some distant corner, in an impenetrable thicket, unapproachable and

forbidding. It was in the very midst of the garden, accessible, and desirable in every way. If it was simply a question of keeping Adam from eating its fruit, it could easily have been removed. Far simpler yet, it need never have been planted. God alone was responsible for all the accessories in Adam's transgression.

But it is of still greater significance that it combined in itself two inseparable functions. Perhaps we would have preferred one tree to teach the knowledge of good, and another to initiate into the knowledge of evil. But this is impossible in the very nature of things. We may strive to conceive of light apart from darkness, but it proves impossible. Light may drive out all darkness, yet its realization depends on its opposite. So good cannot be known by human beings, apart from evil.

The function of evil in the world is to impart an appreciation for the good. It is God's background on which He will paint the highlights of His grace. We do not say that evil is necessary for the *existence* of good, for then it would be primeval in its origin and eternal in its stay. Evil is a lesson which, once learned, will not need repetition. By its blackness it will brighten the beams of eternal bliss long after it has passed out of existence.

Furthermore, Adam, so long as he was alone, before Eve was given him as a helpmeet for him, made no mistake. What he lacked was spiritual discernment. He was ignorant of Satan's words and ways, or he might not have yielded to the desire to share his wife's fate. Adam was not seduced by sin. He was not deluded by the tempter (1 Tim.2:13,14). It was far from a mere excuse when Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Rather, he deliberately involved himself in her sin and transgression and offense. In this He was a type of the Second Man, Who knew no sin, yet became sin for love of His own. It was a mistake for him to hearken to his wife, yet it was a profound proof of his affection, for he chose to be with her in sin and all its consequences, rather than to be alone in impeccable solitude (Gen. 3:12,17).

Nor was the woman's defense a mere excuse. By creation she was not the equal of the tempter. Left to herself she would probably never have thought of disobedience. The great point in man's primal mistake which we must not miss is this, that both Adam and Eve were sinless within, and would never have made their mistake apart from influences from without. Over these they had no control. We realize in ourselves that Adam's sin has put mankind into a place where sinfulness is thrust upon men even before they have a will. So Adam was surrounded by forces which overpowered him.

The position that Adam's sin fulfilled God's underlying purpose in creation, seems to conflict with the charge that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The same seeming contradiction runs through the entire range of Scripture, but may be seen most clearly in the cross of Christ. No one would think of absolving His murderers on the ground that it was God's will that He should suffer. There can be no doubt that all they did was in accord with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, formed eons before they had any existence. But they did not understand His purpose and acted entirely independent of it. The great glory of God's wisdom is displayed in the way He works out His will by means of the ignorance and opposition of His enemies. Christ crucified shows the utter futility of opposing God, for He has our measure and knows what we will do, and has planned accordingly. Let us always keep God's purpose distinct from the process used in its accomplishment.

Some will say then that God gave Adam a prohibition that he might break it. Just so. Later on He gave Israel a law, through Moses. They, too, thought He meant them to keep it, and in a fatal moment of self-confidence, promised to do so. But we are distinctly told that it was given for an entirely different object--that sin might become excessively sinful. Had it been kept it would have

defeated the end for which it was designed. Like the law laid down for Adam, it was accompanied by a curse. Blessing comes through the curse, and not through the keeping of law.

It will be evident, then, that the presence of sin in the universe is not a mistake on God's side, but a part of His plan for reaching the hearts of His creatures. The moment that we seek to shift the responsibility for sin from His shoulders to that of any of His creatures, whether Satan or Adam, then we do indeed involve Him in sin, and a way that strikes at the foundation of all future bliss. If a single one of His creatures ever disappointed the purpose of its being and escaped His control, what will hinder a still more serious revolt? Then God will be dethroned, and chaos rule and ruin.

But we must not be satisfied with tracing sin back to the purpose of God, without discovering something of its place in that purpose, for it is this that gives Him glory and brings blessing to our heart's. If God only *permitted* evil and sin, the plain inference would be that it is a hindrance, rather than a help, in His administrations. Furthermore it would imply that His heart was not in it, and expected nothing from it.

Just as the nature of sin sets our minds at rest regarding its source, so the nature of God heals our hearts as to its object. Now that we know *how* sin entered, it is not difficult to discover *why* it came. It was deliberately introduced by God in order to form a foil for the display of His character and attributes. He planted the tree, He gave the woman, He introduced the serpent. All of the factors which influenced Adam to sin were, directly or indirectly, from His hand.

But His wisdom and His purpose is most clearly seen in the qualities with which He invests the sin even before it has been committed. Is it intended to reveal His justice? Then He must make it the breaking of a prohibitory law. Is it planned to display His *affection*? Then He must make it a breach of fellowship. It is because Adam's sin, or mistake, was at the same time a transgression and an offense that it becomes the means for the revelation, not merely of His hand, but of His head and of His heart.

Keeping before us our accurate definition of sin, we would actually incriminate God, that is, charge Him with failure, if we should insist that Adam's sin was independent of His plan and purpose. If it was God's intention that Adam should continue sinless, if God created Him with the supposition that he would remain holy, then He made a grave mistake, or a sin. But if Adam, in his sin, fulfilled God's purpose, then the very sin of Adam proves the sinlessness of God.

We are sure, then, that sin, or failure, never had any place in God Himself. But we can only maintain this position so long as we acknowledge that it has a place in His purpose. If it is an intruder, unwanted, disconcerting, eternal, then the greatest mistake of all was to "allow" it to enter the universe.

Sin, we repeat, is failure. If God wills the salvation of all, and, because of forces outside Himself, is unable to accomplish the desire of His heart, but plunges the vast majority, or even a remnant, into endless agony, that would not only prove the sinfulness of His creatures, but it would demonstrate to the whole universe that He had come short of the goal He had set for Himself.

In man's vain philosophy wrong is righted by right. But doing right is neutral. The man who pays all his bills promptly does not expect that to settle an old debt. The bookkeeper who makes a mistake is not relieved by the correctness of all the rest. If the mistake has passed beyond recall, he may still be able to adjust matters by making another error to counter balance the former. In God's great account book the sins of His creatures are more than overbalanced by the One Who was made *sin* for us, though He knew no sin.

We cannot "atone for past misdeeds by living an upright life." The Israelite was given no work to cover his sin. A just law already demanded all that he could do. His sins must be met on entirely different grounds. Hence they were transferred from him to an animal which had nothing against it. The outpouring of its soul in the appointed manner on God's altar, made a covering for the soul of the offerer, and swung the scales of justice back to a balance. Not that it actually accomplished this. No animal can substitute for a man.

Man's greatest offense more than corrects his minor mistake in Eden. Do we fully realize that, so far as man is concerned, we owe all we have in Christ to a sin unutterably more awful than Eden's transgression? Do we appreciate the fact that not a single great deed or good act ever brought us blessing at all to be compared with man's most malignant sin? Regarded strictly from the human standpoint, the crucifixion of Christ must stand unparalleled in the annals of sin. Yet it is this sin which settles the Score of Adam and his descendants and which will bring untold blessing in its train.

We are not seeking to exonerate Pilate, or the priests, or the Pharisees, or Judas. We are not trying to excuse the people. Our vocabulary is not capable of expressing our utter contempt of their cowardice, our horror of their hypocrisy, our loathing of their disloyalty, our shuddering at their shameful sin. But this only accentuates our admiration of the inimitable wisdom of God, which uses such men and such material for the removal of all sin. Viewed from the human side they are fiends incarnate: from the divine viewpoint they are God's appointed priests, slaying the Sacrifice upon the brazen altar.

As we have already shown, Satan was the chief instigator in this murder. As in the case of Adam, it is impossible to prove that a single human actor in this scene would have performed his part unless he had been impelled from without. No one can read Pilate's words without acknowledging that he did not desire to have a hand in this unjust deed. He was compelled by the priests, the Pharisees, and the populace. These, in turn, were doing the behest of the Slanderer whose children they were. Judas was actually obsessed by Satan before he dared to commit his foul offense.

If it must needs be that offenses come, truly it must needs be that this offense of the cross should occur. Surely, if we can see sin nowhere else in God's light we can see it here in its true eternal intent, the medium of unmeasured blessing to the unnumbered millions of God's creatures for all time. And there could be no cross apart from man's supreme sin.

They knew not what they were doing. Had they known the monstrous mistake they were making they would never have had a hand in His murder. It was necessary that they should be ignorant. And if it was essential that ignorant ungodly men commit the sin of all sins in order that the foundation stone of future bliss be securely laid, can we not see in this a great example of the method by which God will transmute all sin into eventual good?

## **Sin in Act and in Fact**

THEOLOGY and science have much in common. But it is far more difficult to separate fact from theory in theology than it is in science. Many a "scientist" who has fondly clung to evolution has found that the postulates of that theory are false. One of these, which was once much in vogue, was known as "the inheritance of acquired characters." That is, the experiences of the race are incorporated into our physical frames and are passed on as permanent characteristics to succeeding generations. But it is now known that such a thought is utterly without foundation.

Theology has the same theory in regard to the entrance of sin. It may be stated thus: Adam sinned and acquired a sinful nature, which has been passed down to all his posterity. In theology sin is an "acquired character" which can be transmitted by generation. If this is so, it is the only case in all creation. It is contrary to all true science. Nature knows nothing of it. The question arises, is it really found in revelation? Or is it only another theory supported by authority and tradition? If it is true, let us have the facts!

To test the theory of acquired characters scientists have performed thousands of experiments. Plants have been taken and transformed by cultivation, by changes in soil and elevation, by heat and moisture. But all apparent deviations were found to be transient and ephemeral, for when the plant is returned to its original environment it reverts to its old self again. None of its offspring profit by its experiences. All true scientists have abandoned the theory as untenable and contrary to every known fact in nature.

Only in theology has this theory kept a unanimous following, for it is supposed that the Scriptures teach this evolutionary doctrine. We are asked to believe that a single experience, a single act of Adam, utterly altered his "nature" so radically that he transmitted the change to all his posterity. Of course, it is not necessarily false because it is contrary to nature as we know it. Science does not account for creation. And such a change in Adam can only be explained by a special creation or miracle on God's part. But theologians will be slow to accept the necessary basis of their theory, for they dread the very thought of introducing sin by means of divine interposition.

Is it not time that we followed the example of science and put our theories to the test? What is the scriptural basis for any change in man's "nature" as a result of the "fall?" Some will shudder at the very thought of doubting so sacred and orthodox a doctrine. Let them transfer their reverence from such empty shells of human supposition to the living, imperishable word of God, and their feelings will revolt at that which they now revere. We have long enough covered up the truth with sanctimonious phrases. Let us clear them aside so that we may look upon the face of God's holy word.

If theologians were at least as accurate in their terms as scientists, they would make more solid progress. The use of unsound, unscriptural words interposes an insurmountable barrier to truth. While we may not be able to confine ourselves absolutely to the minutiae of holy writ, all our key words should be scriptural. It is useless to even consider this subject further until we have disposed of some of the phrases that falsify the facts.

We are told that mankind has a "sinful nature." It is true that the word "sinful" occurs five times in

the common version of the "New Testament," but it has no equivalent in the original. Four times it is used for "sinner" (Mark 8:38; Luke 5:8; 24:7; Rom.7:13). Once it stands for "sin" (Rom.8:3). The American Revisers have corrected this mistranslation in their margin. It should read, "the flesh of sin," or "Sin's flesh," not "*sinful* flesh." So we never read of a "sinful nature." Why not? Is it an oversight in the word of God or an imposition on it? Away with the unscriptural words!

Man's "nature" *is* spoken of in Scripture. But it is not the incurably corrupt and utterly depraved thing which we have been taught. Man's corruption and depravity is not connected with his *nature*, but his condition. In that most terrible indictment of the human race, found in the first few chapters of Romans, the apostle never refers disparagingly to human *nature*. On the contrary, he tells us that the nations do by instinct (or nature--the same word) what the law demands (Rom.2:14). How can the "*fallen nature*" do aught in harmony with the law of God?

Man's sin is not inherent in his nature or his flesh. Unless we discard such sanctimonious but unsound catch phrases as "fallen nature," and "sinful flesh" there will be little likelihood of our eyes being opened to perceive what God has so clearly revealed, because of the veil of human tradition.

Most of the difficulties connected with this subject arise from the use, or rather abuse, of the word *nature*. It has such a wide scope and is so indefinite that it conveys only a hazy suggestion. We propose to confine it to the Greek word *phusis*, which it usually represents in our versions. We must protest against its use for *genesis* (James 3:6), and the use of *natural* for the same word (James 1:23), as well as for *psuchikos*, *soulish* (1 Cor.2:14; 15:44,44,46). Indeed if "the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God," and this *natural* man is the antithesis of the spiritual, as our version plainly asserts, then the only hope is in an unnatural, artificial man. It is the *soulish* man who is in view here. It is not a question of nature.

When we assert that Scripture does not use or suggest such phrases as "sinful *nature*," many will suppose that we do not believe that men sin or are sinners. Let us assure them that we hold to this with all the tenacity of which we are capable. We are not questioning these facts at all. We are investigating the word of God to find out what "sin" and "sinner" means. We have found out that a "sin" is essentially a *miss*, and now we are discovering, in the word of God, that a sinner is one who is *wanting* of the glory of God (Rom.3:23).

The opening argument of the epistle to the Romans gives us the most detailed indictment of the human race we have in the Scriptures. It brings the whole world, Jews and gentiles, before the bar of God. Human *nature* is spoken of three times in this portion of the epistle. In the midst of such fearful charges against human conduct, it is most instructive to inquire what attitude the spirit of God takes toward human *nature*. Is it "sinful," "depraved," "fallen?" Or has it retained its integrity in the midst of sin and depravity?

When mankind did not glorify or thank God He gave them over to dishonorable passions to do that which is *beside nature* (Rom.1:26). It is evident that such acts are *not* beside "*sinful* nature." The nature here spoken of protested against the unlawful acts. It remained true even after men had corrupted themselves. Here, in the midst of the most degrading vices, we find human nature uncontaminated. If such sinners still possess a nature which is out of line with their acts, surely they have not a "sinful nature." This is the negative side. On the positive there is a still stronger witness.

We find a most remarkable attestation to the integrity of human nature when the apostle discusses the relation of the nations to the law. "For whenever they of the nations, having no law, may be doing by instinct [or nature] what the law demands, these, having no law, are a law to themselves, who are displaying the action of the law written in their hearts, their conscience joining its witness,

and their reasonings between one another accusing or defending them, in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity, according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ."

It is generally supposed that our "fallen nature" influences us to commit sin, and urges us to go contrary to our conscience and to the demands of God's law. Here we are assured that the opposite is true. The nations have no law to tell them what is right, but they have a nature which, in measure, takes the place of that holy and just law which God gave to Israel. They do what His law demands *by nature*. It is written, not on tablets of stone, but on their hearts. The dictates of nature are confirmed by conscience. In the judgment men will not be excused because they have a "sinful nature," but will be condemned because they disregarded the leadings of their nature and violated their conscience.

Jews will be condemned on the basis of revealed law, which none of them were able to keep. Gentiles will be judged by the law of their nature, which none have fully observed. Perhaps it should be called *instinct*, but a single term is better. We have one specific example in the first epistle to the Corinthians (11:13-16). Instinct (or nature) should teach us that, if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, yet if a woman should have tresses, it is her glory. Human nature does not urge us to do wrong, but to do right. There is some alien influence which overrides the monitions of nature and of conscience.

The mere fact that nature is coupled with God's law and with conscience should be sufficient to show us that it is not the disturbing, offending factor in human conduct. It is on the side of the right. It is not sinful in its tendencies. If sufficiently followed it may lead to a high standard of morality.

The next occurrence of the word "nature," "instinct," fully confirms our previous discoveries. The apostle is now speaking to the Jew, who is resting in the rite of circumcision. He insists that the circumcision of the flesh alone is of no benefit unless it is combined with the fulfilling of the law. Indeed, if one should fulfill the law, his uncircumcision would be counted for circumcision. "And the Uncircumcision who, by instinct [or nature], are discharging the laws demands shall be judging you, who through letter and circumcision, are a transgressor of law" (Rom.2:27).

The law can be discharged by following instinct, or nature. It is evident that God's law is not unnatural, or against nature, but in harmony with it. Human nature has the elements of the law in it. If this nature were fallen, sinful, and depraved, the very opposite would be true. No one could obey his instincts without going against God's law. No one could fulfill one iota of it by heeding his instinctive tendencies.

In these passages the word "nature" is used in its wide racial sense, which must be preserved in this discussion if we hope to attain to the truth. Other passages bring this before us. James speaks of the nature of wild beasts and flying creatures, reptilian and marine, in contrast with human nature (James 3:7). Yet there are passages in which the word nature is used in a more constricted sense, of that which comes through natural processes.

In the passage we have been considering the word is applied only to the nations, the Uncircumcision, for the Jew, in contrast to the gentile, is not left to his instincts, or nature, but is further enlightened by law. Quite the opposite thought is presented in Galatians (2:15). There the question is one of Judaizing. If the gentiles are to be made Jews by putting them under law, they would be artificial Jews, while those born within the covenant from Jewish parents, would be Jews, *by nature*. These two usages of the word "nature" have been confused in our minds because we have related everything to the idea of fallen, sinful human nature.

While human nature is not sinful, sin is propagated by natural means. We all inherit a nature that is



violated by sin, yet we are sinners "by nature," that is, through generation, a natural process. Even thus the nature itself is not sinful. It is merely the method, the means, the avenue used by sin. What is conveyed through or by nature must not be confused with nature.

This should enable us to understand the one passage which, more than all others, has misled us. The expression "by nature children of wrath" has been freely applied to the race, with small regard to its setting in the Scriptures or the teaching of the context. It is the *Jew by nature* who is a child of Indignation, even as the rest (Eph.2:3). The reference is not to human nature, but to the fact that sin comes to the Jew by the natural channels just the same as to the gentile.

All sinned, or missed. And why did they sin? The answer is given forthwith. Because "they are *wanting* of the glory of God." For this we have substituted, "because their *nature* has fallen and become sinful." But the more we search the Scriptures, the more we shall wonder at the marvelous accuracy and truthfulness of this indictment of the human race. Their sin arises from a *want*, not a nature. It is so necessary that we grasp the full import of the word "wanting" that we will give a full concordance of all its occurrences.

Aside from its use as *subsequent* (1 Tim.4:1) and *subsequently* (Matt.4:2, etc.), this element occurs in a verb, WANT and two nouns, WANT-effect and WANTing, both of which signify, a *deficiency*. The exact force of this expression can easily be seen if we note the company it keeps. It is the opposite of superabundance (2 Cor.8:14; Phil.4:12). It makes one an incumbrance (2 Cor.11:9). It is like an affliction (Heb.11:37). It is corrected by filling (1 Cor.16:17; 2 Cor.9:12; Phil.2:30), and readjustment (1 Thess.3:10).

#### ***hustereesis, WANTing***

Mark 12:44 she, out of her *want*, casts in all  
Phil. 4:11 not that I am hinting at a *want*.

#### ***hustereema, WANT-effect, deficiency***

Luke 21: 4 this woman, out of her *want*, cast in all  
1 Cor. 16:17 they fill up these *deficiencies* of yours,  
2 Cor. 8:14 your superabundance for their *want*  
          :14 should be coming for your *want*  
          9:12 tending to fill up the *wants* of the saints  
          11: 9 in *want*, I am an incumbrance to no one  
Phil. 2:30 he should fill up your *want*  
Col. 1:24 those which are *wanting* of the afflictions of Christ  
1 Thes. 3:10 to readjust the *deficiencies* of your faith

#### ***hustereo, WANT***

Mark 19:20 In what am I *wanting* [or deficient] still?  
Mark 10:21 In one thing you are still *wanting*  
Luke 15:14 and *he* begins to be in *want*  
          22:35 do *you want* anything?  
John 2: 3 *at their being in want* of wine  
Rom. 3:23 and *are wanting* of the glory of God.  
1 Cor. 1: 7 you are not *wanting* [or deficient] in a single grace  
          8: 8 *are we in want*  
          12:24 giving that which is *wanting* [or deficient]

2 Cor. 11: 5 I was present with you and *in want*  
 12:11 I am not *wanting* [or deficient] in anything  
 Phil. 4:12 to be superabounding and *to be in want*  
 Heb. 4: 1 some one of you may be seeming *to have been wanting* [or  
 deficient]  
 11:37 *in want*, afflicted, maltreated  
 12:15 that no one be *wanting* of the grace of God

In the later Scriptures, especially in Paul's epistles, we have the principle of sin dealt with as well as the act. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death" (Rom. 5:12). That Adam sinned, or missed the mark, we have already learned. But through this something has come which effectually makes sinners of all Adam's descendants. If it did not enter his nature or inhere in his flesh, what did it do, and how does it accomplish its fatal work?

Much may be learned from a close study of sin's effects at the first, and of the divine judgment pronounced upon it in Eden. The fact that it leads to death, and the decree that thorns and thistles are to accompany its stay, shed much light on its character.

Sin, fully consummated, is teeming forth death (James 1:15). Sin, therefore, attacks the *vitality* of mankind. The change was not in its constitution, but in its life. Adam began to die the moment he sinned. This is the force of "dying, thou shalt die." Since then death has been operating in all his posterity, so that the only life we know is a process of dying. Sin so lowered the vital functions in Adam's body that the aura which emanated from its intense vitality and clothed it with a glorious garment of light, faded so as to become imperceptible to human eyes and disclosed his frame, no longer effulgent with life, but dull and deathlike, naked and humiliated.

It degraded the vital functions so that they became the source of distress and disease and dissolution in death. In brief, sin made no essential change in man's nature, but greatly lowered the power of his life.

Life is the effect of spirit. A lowering of the vital force does not indicate a change in nature or flesh, but in plenitude of spirit. When God takes His spirit to Himself, all flesh perishes (Job 34:14). *Sin, therefore, is a matter of spirit. The act of sin is a matter of spiritual relationship. The fact of sin is a matter of spiritual power.* Like fruit plucked from a tree, Adam was severed from vital spiritual connection with God. Such fruit begins to die the moment it is picked. Such is mankind since Adam sinned. The fruit is the same. Its nature is not changed. Its flesh is not transformed. But its vitality is ebbing away.

The judgment of God on Adam is strikingly suggestive of the true character of sin. Thorns and thistles are concomitants of man's sin and a graphic illustration of its real essence. What are thorns? They are stunted, undeveloped, rudimentary growths, undoubtedly due to the lack of sufficient vitality to develop them into proper form. There were no thorns in Eden. Nor will there be any such thing when once more the plants exult in the ideal conditions and fruitful fertility of the coming eon.

What will be done to change them? How can the rose lose its thorns and the cactus its spines? Will the Creator change their nature? Will He *remove* the sharp and painful lancelets that disfigure and disgrace them now? He will not alter the plant but change its environment. He will fill it with the wine of life and thorns will develop into branches and spines into leaves. The principle that produces thorns and death in plants is identical with sin, which produces degeneration and death in mankind.

What does the gospel bring? It is God's *power* for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom.1:16). Sin is spiritual deficiency or lack of the divine glory (Rom.3:23). The evangel supplies

the missing energy. Note carefully the contrast in the fifth of Romans (verses 6-8). While we are still *infirm* Christ died for the sake of the irreverent. Man does not sin because that is, his nature, but because he, has lost the vital force which should sustain him. His nature might be changed ever so much or ever so often, but that would not doom him to death. Other creatures, who have a different nature, share his penalty with him, for they also share man's infirmity and humiliation.

Note some of the expressions used of sin. Both Jews and Greeks are *under* sin (Rom.3:9). Sin *reigns* (Rom.5:20; 6:12; 8:2). We were *slaves* of Sin (Rom.6:6; 7:16,17,20,23). Sin *mastered* us (Rom.6:14). With the aid of the law it makes a man go against his own will (7:17,18). We have *died* to it (Rom.6:10,11), are freed from it (Rom.6:18- 22; 8:2). *Not one of these things can possibly be true of our nature.*

Sin is essentially outside and alien to human nature. Humanity is not essentially sinful but *subject* to sin. Conscience is instinctive, but it is against sin. Man finds himself at the mercy of an overwhelming tide which he cannot stem, to which he yields, but which never alters the essential nature given him by God at his creation.

It is the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus which frees us from the law of sin and death. The law of Sinai was impotent, because of human infirmity, not because of human nature. In the coming eon men of like nature as at present will be given power to fulfill it. We fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (not its literal enactments) because we have life. The vital force which God's spirit imparts to all who believe in Christ Jesus counteracts the weakness of sin. The spirit which gave life to the dead Christ is making its home in us. The spirit that roused Christ from the dead vitalizes our mortal bodies. The members which would weakly fall into sin are given power to perform acts of righteousness (Rom. 8:1-14).

The importance of these disclosures will be apparent to everyone who has been exercised concerning the question of their own tendency to sin, or who has wandered in one of the many quagmires which this subject recalls. Our "sinful nature" has been the victim of all sorts of theological nostrums. Efforts have been made to suppress it or eradicate it entirely, though it never had any existence! But there is no need to tamper with or eliminate our nature, for no change has taken place in it since it was given at creation. There is not a word in the divine record to show that it was radically altered by the entrance of sin. It may be devitalized, but it is not transformed.

Perhaps many who read these lines will be shocked by their rank "heresy" and will charge me with denying a variety of theological formulas which have taken the place of God's word in the minds and hearts of His saints in these degenerate days. Some may say that this denies the doctrine of "total depravity." As no one knows precisely what that doctrine is, it would be difficult to determine our guilt. As it is not mentioned in the Scriptures, it is not worth considering. It is a sample of that bane of modern theology, a form of unsound words. I believe that all men are utterly unable to save themselves from the slavery of Sin, but that Christ is able. But I refuse to make the word "depravity" a key word in this connection, because it is merely a cloak to cover the lack of clear and Scriptural thinking.

It may be helpful to tell how we came to clear up this question. Quite a few years ago I read some articles in a magazine called "Things to Come" on "the new nature," and "the old nature." They perplexed me, so I studied the word "nature" in my concordance. As a result I came to the conclusion that it was being used in an unscriptural way. I took the matter up later with my, fellow editor, V. Gelesnoff, and we agreed not to allow the word to be used in this way in the magazine. Since then it has been before me in my studies, and has led me to see that it has been the cause of

much confusion. We commend this course to our readers, if they desire to enjoy a clear conception of the mind of God. Do away with all unscriptural expressions. Have a pattern of sound words. God honors it by giving sound thoughts.

Such phrases as "sinful nature," "natural depravity," etc., have had a distorting effect on the doctrine of human destiny. If it is human nature to sin, then mankind will need to be changed to something else if it is to be saved. This has led to the silly superstition that we will become "angels," in a mythical heaven. But God is going to subject the earth and the whole universe to human beings, with "human natures," headed by the great Man, Christ Jesus.

One of the greatest difficulties connected with the incarnation vanishes once we see that the mother of our Lord did not have a sinful "nature." If she had, no amount of sophistry could convince the honest heart that she did not impart this "nature" to her Son. To be sure, a special miracle could have kept Him free from any taint, but we have no intimation that such a miracle was necessary. We have no reason to believe that Mary was free from sin. But the *power* of God is the effectual corrective of sin, so that her Offspring was holy, harmless and undefiled.

All have sinned and are *wanting*, or lacking (Rom.3:23). This simple statement shatters whole systems of theology, especially those held by the most earnest evangelicals. The figure of the new birth has been used to prop up the idea that man needs a new nature. Yet generation has never made any such change in fact. Why should it represent it in figure? Even resurrection does not change our human *nature*. Our bodies will be raised in *power*. They will be *vivified*. They will be *spiritual*, that is, dominated by the spirit rather than the soul, as at present. To be sure, we, who have a celestial destiny, will be changed. But the change is not in our nature.

To sum up. It is utterly unscriptural and misleading to associate sin with a change in human nature. Sin came in through a single act, and no series of acts, or even a lifetime or a number of generations can change the nature of God's creations. Sin destroys life and ends in death. A change in nature does not lead to dissolution. Hence it is that the same theology which gives man a sinful nature also endows him with eternal life in misery and sin. It denies the death-dealing effect of sin and substitutes for it life and a nature, not only miraculously given at the first, but miraculously sustained in order to suffer the infinitudes of torment. We do not care to give our opinion of a god who is so free with his miracles of damnation, when he could, with infinitely less effort, work one miracle of blessing. We do not care to inquire his object in such a course, because this is the way that madness lies--and this god is a mere myth of man's perverted imagination.

How gloriously blessed it is to know our God, Who has given us an understanding, not only of His ways and His words, but of His heart! His nature is love. Love may thrust away its object for a time, but only that it may draw it back more closely. He suffers men to be estranged from Him in order that they may be reconciled. Sin is not His tyrant, but His slave. It crushes that He may cure, It kills that He may make alive. Its function is to show God's creatures their utter dependence on His power. It gives them a wholesome horror of existence without Him. It will change them from His creatures to His friends. It will drive them into His bosom.

## Human Nature

IN God's Word human nature is good. In evangelical theology it is bad, very bad. This is one of those terms which even greatly enlightened teachers of the Bible have altered utterly from its scriptural significance, so that "natural" has become a synonym for *sinful*. Subtly and subconsciously this seriously affects their expositions of the Bible and has a very strong tendency to turn the path of the saints into the direction of asceticism. The extreme result in some of the most earnest souls is an *unnatural* life, rather than a *supernatural* one. They fear every instinctive impulse, and every inherent emotion, as from a sinful source. The effect is an artificial existence, constrained and "religious," lacking some of the spontaneous and exultant joy, or the unleashed liberty which is ours in His Beloved.

But some will say, "Then you do not believe that there is nothing good in man! You think there is something in him which does not need salvation!" By such speeches which are based on evangelical phrases rather than on the Scriptures, much truth can be condemned. For instance, let us use the same argument concerning the human conscience. Is conscience good, or is it bad? Men are convicted by their consciences (John 8:9). If the conscience were sinful, it certainly would not do this. Paul appeals to his conscience (Rom.2:15; 9:1). Of what value is this if it is altogether bad? We are to hold faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:9). To be sure, there can be a defiled conscience and an evil conscience, but these condemn a man, and are indisputable evidence that his conscience is not on the side of sin. The inference from the theological theory of total depravity, that everything that pertains to man is radically wrong, is not true as to conscience. Neither is it true as to his nature. These are both against sin. In sinning conscience is suppressed. That which is *unnatural* is sinful.

The proper way to discover the place which human nature plays in our lives is not to reason it from the evangelical creeds, but to ponder its usage in the Scriptures. As usual, we are led astray by our accepted versions. *Nature* is used also of *generating* or *lineage genesis*, (James 3:6). *Naturally* is also a mistranslation of *genuinely gnōstikos*, (Phil.2:20). *Natural* is the rendering of three words, *genesis generating* or "inherited," (James 1:23) and *psuchikos*, *soulish*, besides the correct term, *phusikos*, *natural* (Rom.1:26,27; 2 Peter 2:12). It is the alteration of *soulish* into *natural* which has caused most of the misapprehension as to human nature. Hence it will be worth while to examine its occurrences quite closely. If the reader will correct the references already given and the following, in his Bible, it will help to clear up the confusion the Authorized Version has created.

### ***psuchikos*, soulish, in the Authorized Version**

1 Cor. 2:14 But the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15:44 It is sown a *natural* body: it is raised a spiritual body. There is a *natural* body, and there is a spiritual body.

:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was

:46 made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is *natural*; and afterward that which is spiritual.

James 3:15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, *sensual*, devilish.

Jude :19 These be they who separate themselves, *sensual*, not having the Spirit.

In the first two passages the reader beholds four of the particularly unfortunate mistranslations in the Authorized Version. It is difficult to conceive of the confusion they have created and still cause among humble and hungry hearts, desirous of pleasing God. They are a snare in their path, a stone of stumbling to their feet. Here *natural* is set against *spiritual*, and, as a consequence, the spirituality of many is unnatural, strained and artificial. Spirituality should not be merely an exterior semblance, but a deep inward instinct. It should become our *natural* mode of life. There is no reference whatever to our human nature in these texts. They refer solely to the *soul*. *Psuchē* means *soul*, and this is the adjective *soulish*. And it does not refer merely to the possession of a soul. All men, even the most spiritual, have consciousness and sensation, which is soul, but they are not necessarily *sensual* on that account. A soulish man is under the sway of his senses, his appetites. His physical pleasures dominate his life. That is not *natural*, it is *unnatural*.

We are distinctly told that sensuality is *beside* nature (Rom.1:26). It is *not* natural to pander to our appetites beyond that which is instinctive. But the instinct which was placed in us at creation was not then sinful and does not become such without becoming unnatural. It is a grave mistake to say that the natural or *instinctive* man does not receive God's spirit, even if it is in the Bible. God has not said it. He has said quite a little which is contrary to it. As trifling as such a "loose" rendering may seem to some, it has deflected the saints into bewildering byways. It is impossible for them to ignore their nature or instinct entirely. When they are hungry they wish to eat, even if it is "natural." If they are thirsty they drink. They follow their instinct (or nature) in avoiding extremes of heat or cold and in making provision for themselves and their loved ones. It is only because our instinct is subconscious that we do not realize how constantly we are dependent upon it. No amount of spirituality will lead us to go contrary to nature.

*What* the soul is, we have set forth fully elsewhere, but a fresh study from another standpoint may be helpful. Soul is *physical sensation*, not *spiritual life*, for which it is usually mistaken. A *soulish* man likes the pleasures produced by eating and drinking and all other agreeable and delightful sensations, rather than the intangible experiences of the spirit. These do not appeal to him. But the mere fact of having a soul does not imply the lack of spirituality. Man has *both*, a spirit and a soul, that is, he has *life* and *sensation*. Yet the body is strongly inclined to follow its feelings. It is soulish at present. But the tyranny of the soul is a temporary condition, due to man's mortality. Had Adam been created immortal, so that he could not die, the life-giving spirit would have so dominated his actions that he would not have sinned. Thus will it be with all mankind, when they are vivified.

It is the *sensual* man (to quote the Authorized Version), or one who is *soulish*, who does not receive the things of God's spirit. How many times has this passage been hurled against me to prove that patient exploration and systematic study of the Scriptures, being the methods of a "natural" man, will never enable me to apprehend God's Word! I thank God for the testimony that I am not unnatural. It is often very difficult to go against nature, or instinct, for it is largely subconscious, but the soul should be well under control. If we allow physical pleasure to dominate our life, then we are soulish, and in no state to receive spiritual revelations.

Now for the positive proof. We beg our readers to carefully consider the following passages, all in which the word *phusis*, *nature*, occurs. The quotations are usually too short to give the full context.

It will help if the reader will turn to each passage and weigh the context carefully. In such a study it has been laid down that success lies largely in seizing a key passage, one which is as literal as possible, and one which clearly exhibits the particular point to be determined. For this we recommend an exhaustive study of the usage of this term in the early chapters of Romans. The first two occurrences, we contend, completely contradict the current theological conception of human nature. We feel very keenly that it is impossible to continue using the term in its usually accepted sense, as "sinful nature," without causing endless confusion, and humbly supplicate our readers, especially those who write and speak, to probe the problem thoroughly:

***phusis*, nature, in the Authorized Version**

- Rom. 1:26 into that which is against *nature*:  
2:14 do by *nature* the things contained in the law,  
:27 uncircumcision which is by *nature*,  
11:21 For if God spared not the *natural* branches,  
:24 out of the olive tree which is wild by *nature*,  
and wert grafted contrary to *nature* into  
-- shall these, which be the *natural*  
(branches)
- 1 Cor. 11:14 Doth not even *nature* itself teach you,
- Gal. 2:15 We (who are) Jews by *nature*;  
4: 8 which by *nature* are no gods.
- Eph. 2: 3 and were by *nature* the children of wrath,
- James 3: 7 every *kind* of beasts, and of birds, and  
-- hath been tamed of *mankind*.
- 2 Pet. 1: 4 ye might be partakers of the divine *nature*,

Not only is nature allied with law, but it accords with conscience. This is important. A "bad" conscience is really a good one. Conscience may be stifled or seared or go unheeded, but it never sides with sin. However callous a conscience may become, what is still sensitive is against sin. A conscience may be weak, but the little strength left to it will not stand with sin. But it is not necessary to labor this point, for I know of none who attribute sin to this faculty. Even those who insist on total depravity would make an exception here. So also they should do in regard to human nature, for conscience seconds only what is instinctive in humanity.

The fact that nature is in line with law is confirmed in the next quotation (Rom.2:27). The Jew had the law and was admitted to that exclusive class called the Circumcision. He certainly should have fulfilled the law which was given to him. Yet he transgressed. They will be judged by the Uncircumcision, who had no law other than the instinct or nature common to all humanity. It was this that enabled some to discharge the law's demands, and maintain its just requirements, in some measure. A sinful nature would be utterly impotent before the law. Instinct is more potent in this regard than exhortation. It is easier to subconsciously fall in line with divine law than to yield a voluntary and intelligent obedience.

In the eleventh of Romans we have evidence of peculiar value as to the significance of the word *nature*, and *natural*. It shows clearly that it is by no means the opposite of *spiritual*. To be sure, the

natural boughs, which were not spared (verse 21), were unbelievers, yet those which will be grafted in again will be believers. It is most unnatural to graft a wild scion into a cultivated tree. Even this was not a sin in the spiritual sphere. How much further removed from lawlessness will be the grafting in of the *natural* boughs back into their own olive tree?

A remarkable passage now claims attention. Paul actually appeals to the teaching of nature to support divine revelation. This would be unthinkable if nature were sinful. Instinct teaches us that there is a difference between the sexes, and this should be maintained in out-ward appearance. What is the glory of one is the dishonor of the other. Our present point does not depend on the interpretation of this passage. All that is necessary is to see Paul's approval of the teaching of nature or instinct. Such language is utterly out of line with present day presentations, in which the natural is never appealed to for confirmation of truth. The fact that nature called for a covering, would probably be a good argument against the custom in these degenerate days.

The next passage (Gal.2:15) is very striking. "We, who are Jews by nature, and *not sinners*..." Jewish nature, as well as the wider human nature, is not sinful in itself. Here it is put in contrast with sinners. Let us insert the evangelical idea that nature is of necessity evil, and we would read of Jews by [sinful] nature, and not sinners. Let us skip to a similar statement in Ephesians, which deals with the same fact. There the Jews are, by nature, children of Indignation (2:3). The Jew had much more than instinct, or nature. He had the law to direct his steps. Here, however, the apostle wishes to exclude his prerogatives. In this grace the Jew must stand on the same level as the gentile. As in Galatians, "by nature" has no hint of sin. I was once fond of quoting this to the effect that I, personally, was by nature, a child of wrath, even as the rest of mankind, and I based my idea of a sinful nature upon it. God, in His grace, has forgiven this offense.

God has a nature (Gal.4:8). Idols do not partake of the divine nature. He is Spirit. Idols are not. He has revealed Himself through a living Image, His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Idols reveal themselves through dead caricatures. The Galatians were slaves of these dumb devices, which could not impart any of their nature to their worshipers. God, however, especially in dealing with the Circumcision in the day of Jehovah, will impart to His people His own instincts, or nature, which will enable them to do far more than the human nature we now possess is able to accomplish, toward fleeing from the corruption which is in the world. It is possible to conceive of an instinct so strongly antagonistic to sin as to repel it. This is not for us. We are given God's spirit. They will be given of His instincts, or nature (2 Peter 1:4). This is the key to millennial conduct.

The instinct of animals varies according to their habitat. Wild beasts live on the earth. They cannot fly in the heavens. It is instinct which teaches a bird to spread its wings, and navigate the air. Each kind of bird has a distinct nature. The eagle soars out of sight. Vultures congregate. Some birds live on the land. Others stay near the water. One will hover in a single spot and dart down with a sudden swoop, and spear a fish. Who taught these creatures their peculiar parts in the economy of creation? It comes from God. It is their instinct, their nature. Each animal keeps within its proper environment. The fish does not long to be on land. This nature is their most precious possession. It never is sinful. Only when they violate their nature is there sin and suffering and death. So is it with the nature of mankind.

If instinct, in mankind, were sinful, the race would perish in a day. It is this subconscious governance which keeps us in the land of the living. It is only after a man has refused to acknowledge the deity of God that he is given over to go against the basic law of his being and abuse his body, and violate his instincts, contrary to his nature, and against the dictates of his conscience. Were our instincts not dulled by sin we would subconsciously fall into line with God's laws, just as



the lower creatures about us.

The practical question arises for the saint, "What shall we do with this nature?" If it causes us to sin, let us crucify it. If it keeps us from sin, let us encourage it. We are never exhorted to crucify our nature. We crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts (Gal.5:24). We are crucified to the world and the world to us (Gal.6:14). This means far more than death. The *flesh* does not deserve a decent death. Neither do we or the world. It is the utter shamefulness of the flesh and of ourselves and the world which calls for the most detestable death which can be devised. This calls for our utmost abhorrence.

But nature and the flesh are at opposite poles in relation to the law of God, even though they are popularly confused. The flesh is not subject to the law of God through sheer inability (Rom.8:7). Those who sow to the flesh shall reap corruption (Gal.6:8). Quite the reverse is true of our human nature. Being implanted by the God Who promulgated the law, it is in thorough harmony with His enactments, and leads to the same results. Corruption does not come in until we violate nature and do that which is unnatural.

This exposition may easily be mistaken for a plea to give license to the flesh. On this account its composition has been long postponed. The reaction due to liberation from unlawful restraint is apt to degenerate into license. The tendency may be to yield to the flesh rather than to set the instincts free. But the temporary abuse of light is no excuse for continuing in darkness. The light may blind us at first, and cause us to blink, but in due time our eyes will accommodate themselves to the brighter condition, and we will become more nearly normal than we ever could be in the darkness. And there will be worship and walk well-pleasing to God.

A conscience constantly cultivated by contact with the living Word of God is the best means of discriminating between that which is of the flesh and that which is the fruit of instinct, or nature. The boundary line between soul and spirit (Heb.4:12) can only be discerned by means of the written revelation, and so it is also between the lawful operation of instinct and the lawless excesses of the flesh. Some of the distinctions are so apparent that even those who denounce human nature as totally depraved say nothing about it in such connections. For instance, matrimony is the result of instinct and is honorable in all (Heb.13:4). The apostle Paul categorically says that the one who marries does not sin (1 Cor.7:28). Yet the leading works of the flesh are simply the unlawful abuse of the same relations (Gal.5:19).

It is the failure to perceive the proper place of instinct that has led such ecclesiastic abnormalities as monasticism and nunneries. The segregation of the sexes on religious grounds is thoroughly unscriptural and, being contrary to natural instinct, has sometimes led to grave irregularities. It is our privilege, for the Lord's sake, to hunger and thirst, and to deny ourselves much which we instinctively crave, if it is done with an intelligent and intense desire to sacrifice ourselves in His service. So did the apostle Paul, because the character of his service, as well as his typical position, was such as warranted it. But he is careful to insist that such a course is not always best. The opposite may be indicated by the sphere of service to which a man is called. So he adds the great truth that God Himself differentiates and gives graciously to each one "some, indeed, thus, yet some, thus" (1 Cor.7:7).

While it is a high privilege to forgo some of our natural and proper cravings for His dear sake, it is better to yield to instinct when it passes our control (1 Cor.7:9), and it is never sinful when we yield to its demands (1 Cor.7:28). As this sentence may easily be cited against me by the enemies of the truth, I will seek to define my meaning by an illustration. A meal is set before me. Shall I eat it? If I

am hungry, my instinct tells me "Yes." If I am not hungry, it says "no." To *disobey* is a sin, not to *obey*. But if my eating would stumble a brother, I have the privilege of abstaining, for his sake and for the Lord's. If, however, I cannot control myself, being utterly famished, I would not sin, even if I ate. Moreover, it may be that, instead of stumbling a brother, my action may help him, or be a witness to the truth. Spiritual conditions should rule, even over instinct. In the resurrection, our bodies will be spiritual, and we should anticipate that condition as far as is possible at the present time.

I should choose my food to build up my body and sustain its strength for use in His service, guided largely by instinct. But if I select it principally to please the palate, and eat to repletion, *beyond* the point indicated by nature, that is *soulish*, not natural. It is unnatural. The fact that instinct is subconscious and weakened even more than the physical functions of the body, has almost eliminated it from the lives of most men. It is like conscience, covered up by custom and nullified by the corrupting influences of sin.

One of the fruits of a return to God and a knowledge of His ways should be a revival of interest in nature, not only in the external world, but in our own selves. Beyond the veil of sin we see His marvels in creation. Among the most wonderful is the instinct of animals. None of the tricks which they may be taught can compare with the inherent law which regulates their being. In itself it is unerring, that is, sinless, however much it may be affected by the rebellion of mankind from God. If the lower creation were destitute of instinct, and dependent only on the slower process of reasoning, it would not long survive. Mankind also has a share of this instinctive perception. It is possible that our lives are regulated by it to an extent far beyond our own calculations. Do we not often find ourselves doing things instinctively, before we have time for conscious deliberation? We meet a person. What is it that repels us or attracts us on the instant? Sometimes it is overwhelmingly powerful, and we try to rid ourselves of such unreasonable prejudice or predilection. It is well not to altogether ignore such revelations of our subconscious personality, but to consider them and analyze them. A subconscious reaction is more likely to be true to our real selves than an elaborate self-examination.

If someone were to ask me point blank, "Do you believe in total depravity?" I would be inclined to say, "Yes." This is a good example of the disastrous effect, of substituting uninspired expressions for the living Word, and then, by faulty inferences, arriving at unscriptural deductions. Paul says, "I am aware that good is not making its home in me *that is, in my flesh*" (Rom 7:18). See how he hastens to guard a statement not nearly so drastic as "total depravity." In this very epistle he has made it clear that conscience and nature are both good. Even in the heart of his argument he puts in a parenthesis, lest anyone should imagine that he included them. Let us not ignore this safeguard, as theology is doing.

Let us be rid, once for all, of the delusion that spirituality consists in thwarting our natural inclinations, In doing so we have been battling with a friend, not a foe. But let this not be interpreted as license to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. One is normal and lawful. The other is abnormal and lawless. Let us cultivate our conscience, so that the instinct may not be taken for soulish, or the sensual for the natural. But above all, let the spirit of God control, through God's Word, so that, at times, we may forgo even that which is good for the sake of Him Who loves us. If need be, let us hunger and thirst in order to bring the bread and water of life to others. But let us not deduce, on that account, that eating and drinking are sinful, but let us eat and drink, and obey every other natural instinct, to the glory of our Creator God.

The Scriptures would have us heed the teaching of nature, the leading of instinct (1 Cor. 11:14). We

are not to do that which is beside nature (Rom. 1:26). For the nations it, in some measure, replaces God's law, with the added advantage that it is written in our very constitution, not on tablets of stone. It may be tht the law, written on Israel's heart in the day of Jehovah, will be the release of this nature or instinct from the thrallldom of Satan, who will then be bound. Tradition seeks to suppress this divine gift, and calls it "*sinful*," but God declares that it is *not*. Let us purge our vocabulary from the false phrase "sinful nature," and seek to disinfect our thoughts from the poisonous impression that we must strive to be unnatural in our behaviour in order to please God. Let us shed the false humility which refuses to recognize the good with which God has endowed all His living creation, the instinct, or nature, which alone preserves it from instant decay and death. Let us thank God for this marvelous nature, without which our most learned scholars, our keenest scientists, would not be able to preserve themselves alive for an instant. It is the presence of God, for in Him we are living and moving and are (Acts 17:28).

## **The Human Heart**

THE human heart has been so often confounded with the nature of mankind that there should be much profit in meditating on its meaning in the word of God. Indeed, one who objected to the thought that human nature, or instinct, is not depraved, sent a long list of passages dealing with the human heart and its dire condition, none of which even touched the subject of human nature. In the early chapters of Romans, where man's nature is out of line with sin (Rom.1:26) and in harmony with conscience and God's law (Rom.2:14), the heart is given an entirely different reputation. It is unintelligent, darkened (Rom.1:21), lustful (verse 24), hard and unrepentant (2:5). How can there be any greater contrast than this?

It is evident that the term "heart" is usually found in a figurative sense. It will help us to consider its literal usage first. It is the organ which propels the blood stream in living souls. Only those forms of life which have blood have a heart. Now the *soul* of the flesh (not the *life*) is in the blood (Lev.17:11). So, as the soul is the seat of consciousness and sensation, only such forms of life as are consciously alive and able to sense their surroundings and move about have a heart. Even a very trifling interference with the flow of blood brings on vertigo and unconsciousness. The heart is the center and power of soul life. It is located deep within the framework of the body, invisible. Its ceaseless rhythm is not noticed by the casual eye. Though every act is dependent on it, it lies hidden, out of sight. The physical organ is seldom referred to in Scripture (2 Sam.18:14; 2 Kings 9:24), but it is the basis of its figurative usage.

In seeking its figurative force we are confronted with an unfortunate fact, if we may so speak. The scriptural import is largely at variance with popular usage in English. In the Scriptures the heart is *never* the seat of the affections or the feelings, though there may be some passages which, taken by themselves, might be so construed. Emotion, in Scripture, is connected with the viscera of the abdomen (Phil.1:8). There is a secondary usage, however, which comes very close to the Scriptures. We speak of the entire personality as capable of being influenced or moved under this figure, as "He has a good heart" or, as it comes out in the adjective "hearty."

Perhaps the most graphic illustration of this word is found in the choice of David, who was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14). Samuel the prophet was sent to Jesse to anoint one of his sons to be the king of Israel. When the eldest was considered, he seemed to Samuel to be just the one for such an exalted office, for he had a comely countenance and was of fitting stature for so high an honor. So Samuel said, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before Him!" But Jehovah said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for it is not as man sees; for man looks at the aspect but Jehovah looks at the heart" (1 Sam.16:7). So seven sons of Jesse were seen by Samuel. But none of them had the heart to be the shepherd of Israel.

Not till all had been rejected did they call David. The character of his heart is hinted by his place and occupation. He was tending the sheep. That was the very work which Israel so sorely needed. Saul was their choice of a king. He was tall and stately, like Jesse's seven sons. But he did not shepherd his people. His heart was not right. It was set on himself. David's was on the sheep. David was fair to look upon, with beautiful eyes, but these were not his qualifications. His heart was devoted to doing the will of God. Beneath the external appearance, here was a man who relied on Jehovah and

delighted to please Him. This was expressed in later life in such deeds as the slaying of Goliath, the sparing of Saul, the kindness to Mephibosheth, and especially in his desire to build the temple. God and His glory filled his heart and made it great.

The difference which now exists between superficial appearances and the heart is a product of sin. In the ideal state a man appears to be what he is. His looks do not belie his character. Such is the perverting power of sin that the spiritual man pays scant attention to outward signs, for they seldom accord with inward realities. This explains why the heart is so often connected with evil and sin, or with its absence. The distinction between appearance and heart could not exist in ideal conditions.

Sin is not a superficial fault. It is not the outward veneer which has been scratched, but the very center and core of life's activities which has been affected. To carry out the figure already employed, it is not a skin disease merely, occasioned by contact with some poisonous shrub, but a vital degeneration of the heart, which vitiates the functions of every organ of man's internal economy.

One of the distressing features of civilization and polite society, to the spiritual man, is the great stress laid upon artificial deportment and manners. The heart must be hid behind a cloak of forms and phrases. It is a sin of good breeding never to expose one's real self, but to sustain a superficial fiction which is supposed to cover and conceal the austerities of life. It is difficult to discover the heart, and it may be best to leave it covered as much as possible, in most cases. But, in the intercourse between saints, it is of the utmost necessity to drag aside the conventional coverings, and deal with deep realities. While our fellowship is to be with all saints, it is impossible to commune with those whose hearts are not right. We are to call upon the Lord with all who have a clean heart (2 Tim.2:22).

Many a fruitless discussion of the varieties of faith, such as "saving faith" and "historical faith," would have been profitable if considered in connection with the heart. There may be an apparent assent and conformity to a creed, or even membership in a religious organization, corresponding to the belief engendered by the signs done by our Lord. He did not trust such "faith" because He knew *what was in* humanity (John 2:23- 25). It was not *heart* faith. Just so today there is a great dearth of that hearty faith which alone is "saving" and "effectual." With the heart it is believed for righteousness (Rom.10:10). The frothy, showy, sentimental, sensational "evangelism" of our day stirs up a stormy emotionalism on the surface but seldom reaches the depths of positive conviction, or grips the heart. Hence mountainous "results" disappear when the evangelistic tornado subsides.

Probably the most quoted passage on the subject of the human heart and its depravity is Jeremiah 17:9:

"The heart is deceitful above all things,  
And desperately wicked:  
Who can know it?"

The last clause is usually omitted, for it does not fit in with the idea generally adduced from the words before it. Much has been said about the word "deceitful." It has been defined as "crooked." It is the verb of the name Jacob. The heart is a Jacob. Perhaps the word *tricky* would be as near as we can come to it. It describes one who trips up another by the heel. The Septuagint renders it "The heart is *deep*, beyond all." As there is a close similarity between the Hebrew word "deep" and the one now in the text, it is possible that "deep" was the right reading when the Septuagint was translated. It leads very naturally to the question which follows: "Who can know it?"

The following phrase is a "desperately wicked" translation, for there is not the slightest suggestion of

wickedness in the word itself or any of its contexts. I confess that I think that the human heart is desperately wicked. This translation proves it. Can there be a sin more heinous than a deliberate change of the meaning of the word of God, *even if the substitution is true*? God is not speaking of man's wickedness here, but of his mortality and frailty. Job said that his wound was "incurable"--the same word. But it was not wicked, and it was cured. David's infant child was very ill (2 Sam.12:15), but it certainly was not desperately wicked.

There are two things which make the human heart a problem no one can solve. It is liable to trip and it is too ill to be depended on. Who can know it? Only the Lord, as the very next verse affirm, "I, Jehovah, heart explorer. "We look upon the outside, but "the hidden human of the heart" is invisible, inscrutable, except to the eye of God. It is like overripe fruit. It may appear luscious without, but is rotten to the core within.

Perhaps the most impressive token of Christ's divine character and mission was His ability to read the hearts of His hearers. His vision was like the modern X-ray. It could pierce all barriers. He looked right through all affectations and hypocrisy. He could see the very thoughts. Before His hearers had uttered their sentiments He revealed them and gave His answer (Mark 2:8; Luke 24:38).

This, also, is the great prerogative of the written word. It is "living and active, and keener than any two-edged sword, and penetrating up to the parting of soul and spirit, as well as the articulations and marrow, and is a judge of the sentiments and thoughts of the heart. And there is not a creature which is not apparent before it. Now all is naked and bare to the eyes of Him to Whom we are accountable" (Heb.4: 12,13).

The truth intended to be conveyed by the unscriptural phrase "total depravity of human nature" is far better expressed by associating sin with the heart. This shows that it is not a superficial phenomenon, affecting only a part of life's activities, but lies at the very source from which every vital action springs, and vitiates every act and thought. Corrupt the heart and the whole man is affected. Sin in the heart permeates the entire being, so that there is no spot sound, no motion or imagination which is wholly right. There is a sense in which it is "total." And there is a sense in which it is "depraved." But both of these thoughts are more concisely and correctly expressed when we associate sin with the heart, out of which are all the issues of life.

If, instead of speaking of a "new nature," we should speak of a "new heart" or a "new spirit," we might not be dispensationally correct; but we would at least be within the realm of revelation. The new covenant Jehovah has made with Israel consists in giving them a new heart and a new spirit. It is this which will keep them from sinning. What an utter contrast is this new covenant with the old! In that they had a part, but they are absolutely passive in the new. It is altogether of God. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezek.36:26-28).

Paul's epistles begin with the dark, unintelligent (Rom.1: 20), lustful (Rom.1:24), hard and unrepentant (Rom.2:5) human heart, but end with a clean heart (1 Tim.1:5; 2 Tim.2:22). This is in full accord with Peter's declaration at the counsel in Jerusalem, when he told the Circumcision that God had cleansed the hearts of the aliens by faith (Acts 15:9). God has given us the earnest of the spirit in our heart (2 Cor.1:22). This it is which makes us sons of God (Gal.4:6). Our nature has not been changed. Our heart is not new. It has been cleansed by the homing of the holy spirit.

Indeed, the realities of heart faith, in the present economy of God's grace, are in contrast to the

superficial religious ritual of Israel. Were they circumcised? We have the real circumcision, which is of the heart (Rom.2:29; Col.2:11). Had they the dwelling place of God? Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph.3:17). Had they a choir to praise Him in song? We give thanks to the accompaniment of the music of our hearts (Eph.5: 19).

The impartation of a new heart to Israel will make them a regenerate nation, fit channels for the earth's restoration in the day of Jehovah. All this is in closest concord with the character of the blessings of that day. These will be soulish as well as spiritual. Just as their physical bodies will be blessed with perfect hearts to propel a perfect blood stream, so the figurative heart will impel them into experiences which will be a joy and satisfaction to their souls. Comfortable and delightful physical sensations are indicated by the "salvation of the soul" and the "new heart." With it they will be given a new spirit.

With us the emphasis is so strong on spirit that, in the resurrection, our bodies will no longer be soilish or, soulish but spiritual. This does not mean that they will not be made of soil, or that we will not have a soul. Otherwise the fact that our present bodies are soilish and soulish would prove that we had no spirit. The soul dominates these bodies: the spirit will rule our resurrection bodies. The glorious celestial habitation for which we wait will be material and will possess sensation, but it will be so suffused with the presence and power of the spirit that matter and sense will take a strictly subordinate place.

It is both superfluous and incongruous to speak of a celestial spiritual body as having a new heart. In that supernal splendor that which is within will shine forth in every perfection of form, of feature or of expression. There will be no "hidden man of the heart," as in these soulish bodies. The possibility of duplicity will not exist, and the phrase which implies the possibility of a discrepancy between the apparent and the real is unhappy and intrusive.

Mankind, since Adam, is corrupt to the very core. Sin has reached the very heart. In this life the believer should cleanse his heart by means of the word of God. He is not given a new heart. That is for Israel in the coming millennium. If we wish to conform to the pattern of sound words (2 Tim.1:13), when we desire to describe the enormity of human sin or the "total depravity of man's nature," we will do so in terms of the heart, and will not refer it to his nature.

## Conscience

CONSCIENCE and consciousness are as closely connected in sense as they are in form. Indeed, the verb of *suneideesis*, TOGETHER- PERCEIVING *conscience*, is *suneideoo*, which means be *conscious*. The Authorized Version renders it be *pry* (Acts 5:2), *consider* (Acts 12:12), *be ware* (Acts 14:6), and *know* (1 Cor.4:4). To this last passage Wigram's concordance adds: (lit. *am conscious*). In every passage be *conscious* is a better rendering. So that, in essence *conscience* is a form of *consciousness*. It is, indeed, a question whether Hebrews 10:2 should be rendered: having been once cleansed have no longer a conscience as to sins, or a *consciousness* of sins, for the original is *of* sins, and the sense comes to the same thing.

It would seem from this that conscience, like consciousness, is a relative perceptive faculty. One might reason that the experience of sin would greatly strengthen the conscience, so that, when once cleansed from sin, the conscience would be present more than ever. But this seems to be denied in this passage. It disappears when sin is cleansed away, just as we have no consciousness of our bodily functions when all is well, but are disagreeably conscious when something goes wrong. As *conscience* seems to be used only in relation to sin in the Scriptures, it seems to depend on sin for its presence. One who does not yield to sin has a good conscience. One who does has an evil conscience. It is consciousness as to right or wrong, good or evil.

When we are beyond the reach of evil we will have nothing to which a conscience can respond, hence it ceases to function, and is practically extinct. Before our first parents ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they lacked this knowledge, hence had no conscience, or consciousness of either. This consciousness did not come to them until after they sinned. Then it found immediate expression. What told them that they were naked? Conscience. Before they possessed the knowledge of good and evil they were no more disturbed by their acts than an infant. We are not born with a conscience. Babies are sometimes unutterably cruel to animals without at all realizing it. They have not yet developed a conscience, for they cannot distinguish good from evil.

Conscience, as its main stem in the Greek indicates, is a *perception*. In usage it has become restricted to the perception of good and evil. Before sin entered there could be no such thing. And when sin disappears it will go with it. It is only a temporary function which is dependent on sin for its existence.

We cannot reason that man was created with a conscience, hence always has had one and always will have. I would not be surprised if Adam was *created conscious*, but it would be folly to deduce from this that he, or his descendants, cannot become *unconscious*. Mankind is *not* conscious perhaps a third of their lifetime, while they sleep. Consciousness is not a vital element of humanity, but a state, an experience, apart from which he may live and move and be. So with conscience, which is consciousness in relation to right and wrong. Where no evil exists there can be no corresponding consciousness, or conscience. When sins are cleansed away we are no longer conscious of them, hence can have no conscience.

One of the remarkable features of the entrance of sin is the entire absence of any indication of a conscience in either Eve or Adam. When we read the record we wonder why Eve's conscience does



not intervene. She should have hesitated, at least, before going contrary to God's precept. There is not the least hint that she had any such misgivings as we would have under similar circumstances today. But right afterward, what a change! Consciousness of having done wrong immediately drove them from the divine presence. They had a "bad" conscience then, though it worked very well. Becoming conscious of sin and guilt is conscience. How could they have this before, when all was very good? Consciousness of evil cannot exist apart from the presence of evil. Even now, one who always seeks to please God is hardly conscious of a conscience. And when sin itself is repudiated, conscience will go with it.

In Israel very little was revealed in reference to the conscience. Even our Lord made no reference to it. Why was this? Where God's law is, there is no need to depend on conscience. The conscience may be weak (1 Cor.8:7) or bad (Heb.10:22), or defiled (Titus 1:15) or even cauterized (1 Tim.4:2). It is by no means an ideal deterrent from evil or guide to the good, even though it may, at times, effect what the law fails to do (Rom.2: 15). But God's law is always good. It can be depended upon. It does not vary with the individual, or with the times. Therefore, in the Hebrew revelation, the law takes the place of conscience, and the appeal is made to the *heart*. It is because Paul deals with the nations who have no law that he appeals so often to his own conscience and to that of his readers.

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF CONSCIENCE

We speak of an *administration* (not dispensation) of conscience because this was the leading innovation which characterized the era from the sin of Adam until the deluge. Before this God had been personally present with the primal pair in the garden of Eden. Thereafter this close fellowship was broken. God withdrew. He gave no law to guide them. They and their offspring were left to themselves. All that they had was the knowledge of good and evil and the consciousness that wrongdoing was displeasing to God--that is, conscience. This was the slender link that united them to God. It was the basic principle of His dealings with them. The object of the entire arrangement was to display the inability of mankind to get on without God, even though they knew good and evil, and had conscience as a constant monitor to urge them to do good.

It is necessary for God's glory and the good of all creation that man's infirmity and depravity should be displayed by a series of demonstrations, in each succeeding one of which he is found under more favorable conditions. In order to do this God alters His relations to mankind, or a select part of it, so as to create a new and more likely situation. These are called administrations. In each there are special "dispensations," that is, divine gifts, but these should not be confounded with the administrations, for the dispensations usually continue, while the administrations change. Besides, if we think of administrations as dispensations we will always try to characterize them by His *gifts* rather than by that which characterizes *God's relation to man*, and governs the mode of His dealings with the race. In my yieldingness, I allowed myself to be drawn into this confusion to some extent when I changed the name of the first administration from *innocence* to *creation*. May I be forgiven this conciliatory error!

A special feature of these testings of mankind is the cumulation of the gifts, in order to make the next trial less severe. Thus, after the knowledge of good and evil was imparted, this was not withdrawn when it failed. It has continued ever since. Nor was government repealed when promise and law came on the scene. As a rule, each "dispensation" remains and is added to the next gift in order to aid in lightening the next trial. But this rule does not always hold. Rather it is reversed when the present grace gives place to indignation.

In order to show what man is, a series of situations is needed in which he fails under continual tests,

each less exacting, than the last. *Dispensations* (God's gifts) are all intended to make the conditions more favorable and give man a better chance of success. The resultant condition is what characterizes the administration. Thus, as a result of the gift of *authority* we have the administration of *government*. Once we see the divine purpose in these succeeding changes, all of the series become intelligible, and we have the desire to crystallize our findings, by giving each a name. We could call the first *No- knowledge-of-good-and-evil* and thus keep within the divine vocabulary. As our word *Innocence* is only a shorter way of saying this, we have no conscience about it. So with the next administration. We might call it *With-a-knowledge-of-good-and- evil*, but *Conscience* expresses the same thing and saves six words and six hyphens.

It may not appear so at first glance, but the testing in Eden was the severest trial that will ever come to mankind, because our innocent ancestors had no knowledge of good or evil. I strongly object to the use of non-scriptural terms, so I discarded "innocent," but we need an expression which condenses this fact in a single term. So I am strongly inclined to restore "innocence," and will hold on to "conscience," for it is its complement, describing as it does those who know good and evil. Without the knowledge of good or evil mankind is as weak as water, and the bond between it and God can be snapped almost without effort or delay. So it happened at the very first trial. As we will see, this test finds man less prepared than any subsequent one, and the reason for this is the absence of conscience to warn Eve before she offended the Creator. Never since has man been so helpless, except in the years of his infancy.

With the knowledge of good and evil man was provided with a conscience and so had a constant deterrent within himself. It took the place of God's personal presence, and did not leave him helpless when He was away. But this inward restraint, this divine voice which indwelt each one, was not sufficient to keep the race from utter depravity. Man, left to the restraint of conscience, corrupted himself beyond remedy. This is a great lesson to learn. In Eden there was no restraint but the presence and prohibition of God. In His absence this failed to keep man from destroying himself. Then comes conscience, then government by his fellows, until we come to government by Christ Himself with an iron club. All restraint fails, when man is left to himself. Only the power and presence of God can preserve man.

### **THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT**

Therefore, after the deluge, an added factor was granted, which has done much to keep mankind from going headlong into destruction once again. *Authority* was given man over man so that wickedness would be punished by man himself, and so deter him from the unbridled violence of the preceding period. Surely mankind ought to stand now! No longer innocent, but possessing the knowledge of good and evil, and restrained by the sword of the magistrate, mankind as a whole has managed to keep from exterminating itself. Yet even this safeguard, as all of God's gifts, has been abused, so that Christ must be called upon to take the reins of government.

### **THE ADMINISTRATION OF PROMISE**

When the failure of human government was practically proven, as conscience had been (although both continue), God makes a radical change in His dealings with humanity. Instead of taking them as a whole, he now selects an individual, and later a nation, to be a channel of blessing to the rest. In a sense the administrations of Conscience and Government continue, for the mass of mankind are not immediately affected by the later administrations. Yet even the promise to Abraham and the segregation of Israel were intended to reach all nations. A select few were to be helped by promises. God came nearer to them by giving them an expectation, which is a very potent power in enabling a

weak mortal to live aright.

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF LAW

Perhaps the most definite and practical assistance, yet the most disappointing, was God's next change. Instead of leaving the nation of His choice under the administration of Government, at a distance from Him, He drew near to His own nation and dwelt among them Himself. Instead of leaving them in the dim light of conscience, He gave them His righteous law, and became their King. This, one would think, should enable them to live righteously and holily, and thus end the demonstrations of man's frailty when apart from God. But they rejected His sovereignty and demanded a king like the other nations. At heart they did not obey His righteous law, but became hypocrites, so that God had to drive them out of their land and scatter them among the nations. Even with all these wonderful privileges, man proved an utter failure.

### THE INCARNATION

But what is the law, compared to the incarnation? The law demanded. Christ gave. The law was holy. Christ was gracious. Surely men would love Him and follow Him, Who was the very Word and Image of the Deity! The people to whom He came had not only conscience but law to enlighten them. Yet, thus highly privileged, man is not merely a failure, but a pervert and a murderer, for they crucify the gracious One.

### THE DISPENSATIONS OF SPIRIT

Now that it is evident that man is at enmity with God, and cannot come to Him apart from His holy spirit, God's dealings take on a new aspect. From now on they are characterized by the importation of His *spirit*. At Pentecost He poured out of His spirit on those of the nation of Israel who believed. Here at last is a power which can cope with human infirmity and sin! Yet, in the Pentecostal administration the nation rejected His spirit and spurned His messengers. So long as they are not all thoroughly regenerated by his spirit, they are not able to respond to His mercy. Here we have the sacred nation at its best, so the demonstration gradually ends. Just as God had turned to them, so, now that He has shown their failure, He turns back to mankind as a whole, but with a new dispensation, spirit, and a new administration.

In taking up the nations once again, God cannot very well deal with them as if they had been under the administration of *promise*, or of *law*, or the *incarnation*, or of the *spirit*, for these were limited to the chosen people. Hence he ignores all this, and reverts to Abraham before his circumcision. All these accumulated privileges had failed, so there was no profit in trying them once again under less favorable conditions. But the *dispensation* of the *spirit*, even in Israel, leaped over the narrow confines of the other gifts and was freely bestowed upon the proselytes of the nations.

### THE READJUSTMENT

The call of Saul of Tarsus was itself a new departure in the ways of God, and the indication of a new administration. Through him God gradually changed His method of dealing both with the nations and with Israel. Instead of heralding the kingdom to the Jews among the nations as the twelve had done in the land, in order to demonstrate their apostasy, he reaches the devout among the nations in order to provoke them to jealousy, as Moses had foretold (Deut.32:21). In this administration, which is dealt with in Paul's earlier epistles, *the nations are blessed with Israel and receive their spiritual things while they themselves are still apostate*. God had not dealt with the nations so before, nor did He even foretell such blessing in the prophets. As it was only a preparatory arrangement, leading up to the next administration, we have called it the *Readjustment*.

## **THE SECRET ADMINISTRATION OF GRACE**

When Paul wrote Ephesians, after the heralding of the kingdom as recorded in the book of Acts had closed, God once more changed His way of dealing, continuing the trend in the era of Readjustment. Then the nations were blessed through Israel, in their defection. Now the character and place of blessing is changed from physical and earthly to spiritual and celestial, hence it cannot come through that nation, but is independent of them. From being guests at Israel's board the nations become fellow members of God's family. From being aliens in God's kingdom they become fellow citizens. From being split into two bodies by fleshly rites, they become joint members of one body.

## **JUDGMENT AND KINGDOM ADMINISTRATIONS**

I suppose that everyone will concede that the judgment era which will follow the present is not an administration of grace, nor was it kept a secret. Quite the contrary. God has warned both Israel and the nations of a time of judgment to come in which His indignation will be poured out. This belongs to and closes man's day, and ends the present evil eon, hence it cannot be incorporated into the Kingdom administration, for which it is a preparation. That the Kingdom is a distinct administration is so generally conceded that it hardly seems necessary to point out its distinctive lines, although it repeats features of the Incarnation, for Christ is present, and Pentecost, for the spirit is poured out and blessing flows through Israel to the nations.

## **Man's Will or God's**

GOD'S WILL is not only ignored by the world today, but even His saints set it aside, or water it down to a mere wash. How few there are who hold that the universe is being operated according to the counsel of His will! It has become the fashion to say that *will* means *wish*, and the margins of some Bibles do not hesitate to change it to *desire*. We are assured that God does *not will* all mankind to be saved, but merely *desires* it, and, since man *wills* otherwise, He is quite powerless and impotent before the superior force of human determination. God is He Who is operating in us to will (Phil.2:13), yet even those who teach a "full surrender" insist that our own will is to be the means of honoring Him. The truth is that man's will is always opposed to God's, and the saints are safe only so long as they accept His will, as revealed in the Scriptures, and reject their own.

Because the English word *will* is popularly used in a variety of ways it has lost the definiteness which it should have in the Scriptures. In the Authorized Version it is the mistranslation of *counsel*, *opinion*, *wish*, *about*, *eagerness*, *delight*, *accord*, and *voluntary*. Greek lexicons also lack clearness, and usually give a number of synonyms which define other Greek words. Thus *wish* is *euchomai*, which lacks entirely the sense of determination essential to *will*, as is shown by its occurrences (Acts 26:29; 27:29; Rom.9:3; 2 Cor.13:7,9; James 5: 16; 3 John 2). The words *intend* and *intention* have a more far-reaching significance. They come from the verb *to plan*, and look beyond the immediate action of the will to the ultimate result. This is very important in the passages where it occurs (Acts 27:43; Rom.9:19; 1 Peter 4:3). *Resolution* or *resolve* also takes us to the object to be attained, not the immediate posture of the mind. *Purpose* means *before-place*, a future accomplishment kept in view beforehand. Such terms do not *define* the Greek word *thelema*, but rather show what is *not* its meaning. The usual alternative given is *desire*, making it a matter of feeling rather than of mind. Passages are actually adduced to prove this, such as our Lord's words in Gethsemane, because the context is full of feeling and the sentence is in the negative. But even here (Mark 14:36), it is God's will as well as Christ's which is in view, and it is most unfortunate to speak of God's desire that Christ should endure His awful agony. It is our hazy, overlapping English usage which blinds us to the clear cut distinctions of the inspired oracles.

Not only is the English word used for such a variety of terms in the original, but the Greek word *will* is translated by at least ten different English expressions, *desire*, *be disposed*, *be forward*, *intend*, *list*, *love*, *mean*, *please*, *have rather*, and *will*. How can there be aught but confusion when God's words are thus violated in a translation which purports to be God's Word? *Desire* is *epithumia*, and has to do with the *feelings*, rather than the determination. *Be disposed* is *phroneoo*, and expresses the *bent* or *bias*. *Intend* is *boulomai*. *Love* is *agapaoo*. *Please*, produce an agreeable sensation, is *areskoo*. It is impossible to get God's mind through man's mistranslations. The CONCORDANT VERSION uses only *will*, with *want* as an idiomatic alternative, to prevent confusion with the future tense, and *behest* in an evil sense in one passage (Eph.2:3). This may not always tickle our ears, but it will not fail to illumine our hearts.

In English idiom, a man who is *willing* to do or be something is a passive agent, who acquiesces or assents to another's wishes. Hence a true translation demands that we change the word in such cases to *want*. For many it will be difficult to distinguish this from *wish* or *desire*, due to the vagueness of

our language. As the element of desire is usually included in our determination, it is easy to confuse the two. In the CONCORDANT VERSION *will* or *want* as the translation of *theloo* always carries the thought beyond a mere wish.

The confusion which has arisen is evident on all sides. We are assured by those who take the place of teachers and have much light, that a very common use of this Greek verb *theloo* has the sense of *desire* or *wish*. As a result each one interprets to suit his inclination, according to his system of theology. The tendency is to make it *will* when used of man, and *wish* when used of God, for if men are determined to have their own will and deny that God is entitled to anything more than a desire, they may as well go to the end of their tether, rather than hesitate on the way. In all our investigations it is well to recognize the inclination of man to exalt himself and to degrade God. Man has a "free will," we are told, and many are ready to defend the error. But where are the men who will fight for the "free will" of God?

But the greatest havoc is wrought when the believer is exhorted, either to abandon or to assert his own will. One of the most serious aspects of the present apostasy lies in a species of hypnotism or mesmerism, in which the subject seeks to *yield* himself entirely to an outside spirit, under the false supposition that, in so doing, he must, of necessity, fall in line with the will of God. But there are many wills in the world besides our own and God's. Many, unconsciously, are subject to an evil spirit, supposing that the impressions they receive come from God. They think they are, in effect, inspired, and imagine that they do not need the Scriptures in order to be guided by the holy spirit. The significant fact which condemns this system is its practical repudiation of the written Word. The true spirit of God communicates His will to us *only through the medium of the Scriptures*. To this spirit we may safely say, "Thy will, not mine." But to spirits which speak directly we should say, "God's will, not thine."

Still more subtle for the true student of the Scriptures is the teaching that we are to assert our wills. It was well expressed in a religious weekly as follows:

"Certain it is that God has given us our wills as a precious and vital stewardship to be used to his honor and glory. The life that has been born again by faith in Christ as Saviour, and then has been yielded in full surrender to him as Lord, is not a life from which the will disappears but in which it is to be used as never before, energized by the very power of 'dynamite' *dunamis* of God. The surrendered, Spirit-filled life that rejoices to abide in Christ is far removed from one of passivity or inactivity. To all such are addressed the words: 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil.2:13). The Greek verb here translated 'will' is the same verb *theloo*, expressing something infinitely stronger than mere wish or desire, for it is the purpose, the determination, the very will of God that works in the lives of his children."

If our readers will consult all of the occurrences of *theleema*, WILL, they will obtain both pleasure and profit. Out of about sixty occurrences at least fifty speak of the will of God. Man's will is not very important, according to the divine reckoning. The list begins with "Thy will be done" (Matt.6:10) and ends with "for Thy pleasure [will] they are" (Rev.4:11). In Romans 2:18 God's will is recognized as *the* will which needs no further specification. The Jew knew the *will* because he had the divine oracles. The coming kingdom is briefly characterized as the time when men will not do their own will, but the Father's.

The whole mission of Christ may be summed up in this word, for He came to do the will of God (Heb.10:7,9). He amplified this when He said, "I am not seeking My will, but the will of Him Who

sends Me" (John 5:30). This is emphasized by repetition, when, a little later, He protests, "I have descended from heaven, not that I should be doing My will, but the will of Him Who sends Me" (John 6:38). Is it anywhere apparent that Christ exercised His will except in complete accord with His Father? He did His Father's will and did not do His own. He was not "passive" but active, but that did not consist in asserting His will but in fulfilling His Father's. When, in Gethsemane, His will was out of line with God's, He was strengthened by a messenger (Luke 22:42,43), *but His will was not*. In the crisis of our lives we do not need a vigorous determination, but strength to acquiesce in God's will for us, which involves the repudiation of our own.

But our principal object in writing this article is to call attention to the operation of man's will as presented in the Scriptures. Only a few hours after our Lord had resigned His will in order to do the Father's Pilate gives Him up to *their will* (Luke 23:25). Here we have man's will crystallized into a single word, perhaps the most terrible which will haunt humanity until the consummation, "*Crucify!*" Whenever you hear human determination extolled, may your ears ring with the echo, "*Crucify!*" The will of man was brought to the great Touchstone and was found to be base metal. Even Pilate, who could have thwarted their will, did not succeed in curbing its stubbornness. Here is man's free will! "*Crucify Him!*"

Such was the will of those who had God's revelation, the religious nation, which had been trained by the law, and knew "the will" (Rom.2:18). Of these also it is said that they walked in accord with the spirit now operating in the sons of Stubbornness, doing the behests [wills] of the flesh and of the comprehension even as the rest (Eph.2:3). This is most illuminating. It shows that the will of a man, either Jew or gentile, is the compounded effect of complex causes, over none of which he has any control. There is a spirit, not his own, which influences him. His flesh demands recognition. His comprehension is another factor. Men do not really make up their minds. They are made up for them. All are powerfully influenced by the spirit forces which can be neither seen nor felt, but which can be detected by their effect. The spirit of the times carries men on its current. It does not conform to the will of man, but conforms his will to it. Then there is the flesh. Most men are mastered by their physical frame, and find their wills utterly powerless to oppose its behests. The mental atmosphere adds its influence. Human comprehension is darkened (Eph.4:18). As man is a creature, he cannot create his will out of nothing. He compounds it out of the material at hand. The kind and quality of the materials determine the character of his will, but he has no control over these elements. The process is subconscious, so he does not even apprehend what he is doing, any more than he comprehends the details of digestion. He can choose his food with conscious care, but he cannot supervise its assimilation. In the sphere of will he is altogether at the mercy of influences beyond his powers of perception.

What do we do where we "make up our minds?" We simply open the doors to surrounding influences to see what is preponderant. Very often when we will a certain way we are utterly unable to give any rational reason for our determination. I have just been speaking with a member of the Chosen Race, who is undergoing much needless hardship in Palestine. There is no lack of money. Many sons in the United States are successful manufacturers. "I do not wish them to know how I am faring, or they would hire an aeroplane and fetch me home. Why do I stay here? *I don't know!* I came here on a visit, and I can't leave. Discomforts, distresses, isolation from my loved ones should draw me away. But *I will* stay here, There is something within me which I can't explain. It holds me here." The sacred associations of Palestine have much to do with the will of the Jewish people.

But a believer should not be caught in the current of the spirit which carries the sons of Stubbornness to destruction. They should not obey the behests of the flesh. Their *own* wills would involve the

flesh. But we are not in flesh, but in spirit. Its behests should have no part in our lives. Its disposition is death. We do not walk according to it. Our comprehension is no longer darkened, it is true, but all of the actual light which it has comes to us direct from God, by His spirit, through His Word. In reality this is not ours, but God's.

In place of the evil spirit which operates in the sons of Stubbornness, we are actuated by the holy spirit of God. Leaving out the flesh entirely, the spirit acts upon our minds to renew them by means of God's written revelation, that we may know with certainty what God's will is for it alone is good, and well pleasing and mature (Rom.12:2). The will is no longer a mysterious, subconscious combination, formed in the dark without our intelligent cooperation, but a simple, uncompounded, illuminated renunciation of the influence of the flesh, of our own comprehension, and of the evil spirit forces which surround us, and an intelligent acceptance of God's revelation by the power of His holy spirit.

That this is so difficult to some of us arises from the fact that we allow our own will to modify God's. The factors that form it still assert themselves. Do not *strengthen* them! Crucify the flesh. Lean not on your own understanding. Reject the spirit of darkness. But most of the failure arises from an inaccurate immature and distorted knowledge of God's will. We cannot turn to an index and find specific directions for every crisis in our lives. This is not at all necessary. If we but knew His Word we would always find the factors for the solution of our problems. These should be so thoroughly assimilated into our systems that they become a part of our very being. We cannot do His will without knowing it. We cannot know it fully without a comprehension of His ways. This comes alone through an exact, a comprehensive, a mature insight into the Scriptures, more especially that which is the proper portion for this administration of God's grace.

In the final analysis men really have no will absolutely their own. Like their bodies, the elements which compose it were external to themselves, and it becomes theirs only as a combination of these outside materials. But the combination is peculiar to themselves, so it becomes, in that sense, their very own. This is not the case, however, with the saint. There is no combination of materials, or should not be. The spirit of God alone, acting through a recognized written revelation, should take the place of our will. This is the only safe basis of action.

It would be sad, indeed, if our own will, compounded of the subconscious influence of the spirit, the flesh and the comprehension, should be *strengthened*. It made us sons of Stubbornness before we believed. Strengthening will only make us more stubborn. There are saints like this, but it should not be encouraged. Instead of a precious and vital stewardship, our wills are a deadly and damaging deposit which we should discard. As our own wills are continually present with us, we need strength to repeat, with every heaving breath, "Not mine, but Thine!"

Happy is the man who has so harmonized himself with the will of God that he may speak of it as his own! So it was with our Lord, for the spirit world could not influence Him, His flesh was holy, and His comprehension perfect. He could say "I will" (Matt.8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13), and the cleansing of the leper shows what God's will coincided with His. It was His will to protect His people (Matt.23:37; Luke 13:34), but not theirs. He called to Himself whom He would (Mark 3:13). It was not His will to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans (Luke 9:54). He willed that His own should be with Him (John 17:24). Even in the garden of Gethsemane, when His will could not coincide with the Father's He rose above it and gave us the great motto which we need almost constantly, "Not what I will, but what Thou!" (Mark 14:36).

It is not our place or privilege to determine the actions of our fellow saints. Paul, with all his



apostolic authority, did not coerce Apollos to come to Corinth. As distinct from our brethren, we may have a will differing from theirs even when both are in line with God's. Undoubtedly God wanted a record of Paul's entreaties of Apollos as an example for us to follow. The only difference was the time when he should come (1 Cor.16:12). They seemed to agree on all else. Apollos waited until the time was opportune. Paul was not acquainted with this element in Apollos' decision. It is impossible for us to know all the details in another's life, which determine his walk. Nor is it wise that we should. It is God's prerogative to order the lives of His people.

The seventh of Romans deals with the will of one under law (verses 15-21). He wants to do good, but cannot carry out his ideal. It is God's will applied to the flesh, in order to show that the flesh is not subject to God's law, for it is not able to fulfill its demands. What is the solution? The strengthening of man's will? No! it is grace, which delivers from the condemnation of the law. All sorts of methods have been tried to cultivate the human will so that it will enable men to overcome the propensity to sin. But the law itself is really an expression of the will of God for those to whom it was given. Nothing could be stronger than that. When it is written on their hearts, in the days to come, it will be quite adequate. Then, however, it will *displace* the human will, not strengthen it.

Our conclusion, that man's will is utterly excluded in the salvation of the sinner and in the sanctification of the saint, is fully confirmed by definite statements of Scripture. *In the place where the basis of salvation is discussed* (Rom.9: 9-18), Paul insists that "it is not of him who is willing, nor yet of him who is racing, but of God, the Merciful." The perversity which persists in injecting passages on other subjects in order to nullify this decisive declaration is one of the saddest signs of our times. "Whosoever will" is testified to the *ecclesias*. These are invited to take the water of life gratuitously (Rev.22:17). The use of this phrase in preaching the evangel is a most flagrant perversion. Also, to reason that, because some will *not* come to Christ (John 5:40), therefore only those who *will* are saved, is only one more instance of the depravity of the human intellect. *All* men will not. Their will prevents them. Only the superior power of God's will brings men to Him.

Philippians is the epistle to discover what place man's will has in perfection experience. There we read that "*it is GOD Who is operating in you to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight*" (Phil 2:13). This is precisely what to expect from our previous investigations. The evil spirits no longer should affect our will, the flesh should be ruled out, our comprehension is not consulted and our determinations are to be based solely on the Scriptures. By means of His spirit and His Word our own will is superseded by His determination. The result should be not merely a righteous record in the sight of men, but a life to delight the heart of God.

A few of God's saints believe that the goal of God is to be All in *all*. Most of them *will* not believe this even though some say that they *wish* it were so. But there are two *alls* in this august assertion. How many of us realize the force of the first? It is dreadful to contemplate a universe in which God is all in only a few, and the rest are in torment eternal. It is sickening to survey the world as it is today though only a few are in actual agony, and that for a brief period. But more awful still is the vision of a world in which God is only a little in all. What terrible chaos would come if each creature should become independent of its Creator, going its own way without regard to the rest and without heeding Him! A single planet, if loosed from the law of gravitation, might wreck the whole solar system. If all were released, the imagination fails to picture the result. So with a world unleashed from the will of Jehovah. It would be death or torture eternal for all.

Great is the cry against making puppets, mere automatons, out of men. At all hazards, we are told, we must maintain human individuality and the godlike attribute of free will. What is the meaning of this? It is nothing less than the revolt of the creature against the Creator, the desire to be as God,

even though it is always presented under the guise of religion. It is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures, but it is the basis of most interpretations of the Bible. Even in human affairs it is impracticable. All social rules, all government, laws of every kind are an infringement on the will of the individual. If we were absolutely alone in the universe we might be a law unto ourselves. But so long as we are related to our Creator and to our fellow creatures, there must be regulation, or there will be confusion and collision.

In their proud repudiation of the position of puppets men are acting merely as phonographs, for they repeat a well-worn record made by the spirit that is operating in the sons of Stubbornness before man imagined he had a free will, in the garden of Eden. "You shall be as God." I repeat. He provides the record and he turns the handle and a man speaks. What a wonderful little god he is! He would really deceive himself much easier and play the part much better if he appeared as a puppet. Some of them are very convincing. Have you ever inquired whence man obtained this self-determination of which he is so proud? Have you ever pictured where it would land him if it were really allowed to run amuck? He is jerked about by invisible strings, by unseen hands, just as really as if he were a puppet in a Punch and Judy show.

He is merely a creature trying to convince himself that he is a creator. He has nothing that was not given him. He does nothing except under the force of an external or inherited stimulus. All that ails him is that he is ignorant. He is like many who drive automobiles in these days. They touch this button or shift that lever and it goes--or doesn't. They are quite exhilarated by the sense of power imparted by the speeding machine. But if the gasoline is exhausted on a lonely road, and they have to push the heavy car, or are unable to do so, the sense of power is replaced by a sad sense of impotence.

Few really realize what it means to be a creature. We cannot help acknowledging that our will was not consulted when we were born. We were not even asked where we desired that important event to take place, or who should have the honor of being our parents. Our frame, our figure, our face--all was forced upon us by an irresistible fate, against which many of us rebel. If most of the vital operations in our bodies were not involuntary we would perish at once, for not even the most famous of physicians understands all of its functions. Let this physical fact sink deep into our minds. Our bodies are not conjured out of space by our self-determination. We breathe the air, almost unconsciously. We partake of food and assimilate it altogether apart from our direction. The resultant, physical frame defies our determination. We want to be tall, so we are small. No one can add a cubit to his stature. The will has little effect on the tangible part of our make-up. So also with the intangible.

Our thought processes are hid from us by a thick veil of ignorance and unconsciousness. We need to be awake to receive and register outward impressions to some extent, but their assimilation into the body of our thoughts so as to produce ideas and guide our determination, is a subconscious operation, over which we have no control. Indeed, it is best accomplished during sleep. The unbeliever breathes in the spirit of the age. He is soulish and seeks the pleasures of the senses. His mind is impressed by the evidence of his faculties. These form his will. He is quite impotent to form any determination opposed to these forces. He is utterly at their mercy. He is not only a puppet, but a victim. When the law comes to enlighten him, he begins to realize his wretchedness (Rom.7:24). Salvation consists in the displacement of the spirit which operates in the sons of Stubbornness (Eph.2:2) by the spirit of God. The flesh and comprehension hinder its full realization until resurrection and vivification.

If the believer's will is subconsciously formed by the operation of the holy spirit, through contact

with the Scriptures, his will is no more his own than is that of the unbeliever. It is God Who is operating in him to will. O, the blessedness of this condition! Puppet? No, but prophet! Slavery? No, but liberty! Misery? No, but happiness! Only thus are we normal creatures in harmony with our Creator. If the eyes of our hearts have been opened to God's grace we will dread our own determination. We will lose all confidence in ourselves, and know that, whatever is ours, as distinct from God's, can neither benefit us nor bless Him. So we rest gratefully in the only will that will work our weal.

But, some will say, *We must will* to do God's will. Very well then, if you *will* have it so. Our Lord preferred to put it otherwise. But how strong must our *wills* be to accept His? Is it to be a continual, exhaustive effort? Where are we to get the strength? In reference to God, it will be His will. As distinct from our fellows, we may call it ours for it will issue with infinite variety and diversity in the lives and experiences of us all. In regard to ourselves, we shall be delighted to make it ours, for there need be no conscious effort to conform to God's will as opposed to our own, when our bodies are transformed into spiritual and immortal. Only thus can God actually become *all* in us.

God's goal is to become All in His creatures. Is this to be attained by giving each an independent will so that they may be His rivals in the regulation of the universe? Is anarchy the end He has *in* view? To be all in another is the plainest form of infant speech, yet who knows the fullness of such simple syllables? Now, in creation, all live and move and are *in* Him. Then, by means of the sacrifice of His Son, the converse will be true. He will be *all in them*. *All*, not a little, or much, or most. Let no one dare to limit it! Naught will be in us but the loving, life-giving God, Whose spirit will operate, not only to give us indissoluble life, but to formulate our will and perform our work. Only thus will God get the glory and the praise and enjoy the delight which alone will satisfy His heart and fulfill the aim of His creation.

There is room for only one will in this world. Two wills is confusion, three is chaos. Give every creature an unconquerable will, and you create a condition which can only cause a continual and eternal clash. Peace and happiness will be impossible. Discord will drag all down to everlasting destruction. God will become all in none. Therefore it cannot be. He will be All in all. His will alone is irresistible. It only will prevail. It will operate in His eonian saints and bring back blessing to mankind. It will become the one will in all the universe. Harmony and sweet accord will reconcile all creatures to Him and to each other. All will sing the same song of His composing. In all, the mighty spirit of the living, life-giving God will operate with magnetic force to attract each creature into the normal, irresistible ecstatic, current of His loving, illuminating will. He will be their *All*.

## **The Phantom of Free Will**

THE distressing effect of the antagonistic doctrines of free-will and fatalism on the character of God calls for a readjustment of our thinking along scriptural lines. The word of God knows nothing of free-will, nor does it recognize fatalism. Some elements of each are present. There are "free-will" or voluntary offerings. There is the definite teaching that God is operating all in accord with His purpose. Yet neither of these denies the other. One is the divine viewpoint; the other the human. It is not only possible for faith to revel in God's sovereignty while recognizing human freedom, but it is our privilege to understand how this sovereignty can be and to rest in the knowledge of it.

The problem is a very practical one. Let us suppose that we have learned that God is carrying out His will, and that nothing man can do is able to defeat Him. The question then arises, What is the use of doing anything? Why pray when everything has been prearranged? The answer is very simple. God has prepared good works that we should walk in them. It is His will to exercise our hearts as to His ways and to engage our affections through the veil of uncertainty and ignorance which lies upon us. He would not have us know the details of His operations lest we repose on them instead of throwing ourselves unreservedly on Himself and confidently confiding in His love.

Man's limitations and ignorance are the foundations of his philosophy. He judges all else, even God, by the prison in which his faculties confine him. Surface appearances press on his consciousness and keep him from considering the actual, though imperceptible, realities of existence. Many a man has imagined that he is carrying out his own free-will when he was, in fact, in the toils of another, and was doing the behests of a subtler intellect than his own. An unconscious man being carried to prison by a squadron of police is "free" so far as he is aware. So all men, unconscious of the tide and currents which are carrying them along, acknowledge no constraint, for their perceptions have become too calloused to perceive them.

What is the human will? Wherein does its freedom consist? It is my will to write upon this theme, yet I am conscious that it would not be my will but for the constraint of another Will, which is not mine. It is my will to do the will of God, to submerge my will in His. And, however contradictory it may seem, I have no freedom in doing my own will. There is no liberty for me but in the will of the Lord. So it will be seen that the human will is not absolute, and its freedom is relative. We shall see, as we consider the matter further, that there is no freedom for the will apart from subjection to God, nor is there any absolute determination except on the part of the Creator.

The human will is dual in its source. It is the product of heredity and environment. Each of these is an indescribably complex composite which none of us can analyze, much less control. Why is it the will of all men to sin? Because it is a part of their inheritance. We cannot say they are free to sin, for then some might escape. Has any man the choice of his race, his nationality or the place of his birth? And yet what vital factors these are in every act of his life! Can we think of his volition in a single matter which is not affected by factors over which he has not the remotest control? I write this in the country, far from my books. It was not my will to come, but circumstances arose which made it expedient. These circumstances were made up of a hereditary weakness and an uncongenial environment. My will, if "free" or uninfluenced by external environment, might have led to illness or even death.

What is really meant by freedom of will is the correspondence between heredity and environment. Lack of friction is mistaken for liberty. If the impulses received from our ancestors urge us into a course agreeable to our surroundings we have the consciousness of being free to do as we please. But to imagine that these seeds of our volition were planted by our own hands, or that they have been conjured forth by us from void vacuity, so that our will arises without roots, and flourishes without soil, water or air, is sheer imbecility.

Where does the will come from? Do men create it out of nothing? That would be a feat more wonderful than any legerdmain of which we have ever heard. If so, God is interfering with the creative capacity of His creatures. The wise man knows that the human will is easily influenced from without. In fact it can be changed easily by one who understands human weaknesses. It is manufactured out of motives. It is a compound, made out of what we are within and where we are without. Heredity and environment fuse together to form it. Our wills are determined for us to a large extent by our ancestors, especially one named Adam. The mixture is finished by our associates and associations. If we had brains enough we could figure out any given will-problem like a sum in arithmetic. A given man will react to a given situation as surely as half a dozen plus six makes twelve.

When a man makes up his will he subconsciously considers his own ego, that particular expression of the Adamic nature which successive breeding and in-breeding has brought to the surface in his case, though much else is latent. He couples this with contacts which he has made with the world about him, material, soulish or spiritual. Add to this compound the psychology of the moment, especially such forceful factors as the state of his stomach or the condition of his finances, and, if you were wise enough, you could make up his will for him. In fact, wise men have always acted on this principle. They do not attempt to capture the will by a frontal attack. They know that "he who is convinced against his will is of the very same opinion still." They execute a flank movement. They seek to change or modify one or more of the factors which compose the will. If a child will not eat healthful food, let it go hungry for a time. If it refuses to give up a sharp knife with which it might cut itself, offer it a more desirable plaything. Few men ever attain maturity in such matters as these, and all may be made to change their mind by the very factors which have formed it in the first place.

When the Creator wound up the great clock of the universe, He determined for all the eons exactly where each speck of star dust should be at any given moment. When He created Adam He implanted in him all the potencies which are present in all his progeny. He started the great wheel of human volition on the course He had prescribed. Were it not so this world were a madhouse and worse, for there is method even in madness. Let us forever banish the thought that the human will is the one lawless, independent, supreme, God-defying force in the universe. Throughout the word of God man's will is subordinated to the will of God. Temporarily it appears to oppose Him and is contrary to His revelation, but ultimately it works His way. The case of Pharaoh shows us that He by no means limits His operations to His revealed will. He must provide opposition to His word in order to manifest Himself.

In these matters man is not subject to a "blind fate," but to a beneficent Creator. He provides parents and food and drink and air, not blindly, but blessedly. All this is a parable of those ethereal functions of our being, the mental, the emotional, and the voluntary. As Creator, God supplies us with the tendencies of our ancestors and with our surroundings and associates. These are incorporated in our mental tissue and enter our brains through our organs of sense. There are times when these two sources contribute materials which will not mix, and we cannot "make up our minds." But, in most cases, we subconsciously act upon the impulse provided by the union of these two streams without

considering our course.

What most perplexes us is the fact that man's will is always apparently opposed to the will of God. We do not recognize the fact that man is a mere creature, and, as such, has not even the power to oppose God unless it is implanted in Him by the Creator. For the purpose of His self-revelation it is God's will that His revealed will be withstood. He has set into action two opposing forces. It is characteristic of Him to do this. We do not apologize for it, neither does He. He kills, He makes alive. He wounds, and He heals (Deut.32:39). He plants impulses in the human heart and surrounds men with influences which impel them to oppose His revelation. It is imperative that God should clash with His creatures. It is essential that their wills withstand His. But in the ultimate analysis both of these conflicting forces can be traced back to the only Source and Origin of all.

Men imagine they are sovereign in the realm of the will and that no one can break their resolution--no, not even God. This is childish. They have no greater control over it than the captain of a sailing vessel has over the set of his sails. If he is not demented he will spread them to suit his course, and that is determined for him by the breeze. There are spiritual winds to which men bend their wills. They may whistle ever so long, but these spirit forces are beyond their perception and above their control. Hence men do the will of the flesh and obey the behests of evil spirit powers of which they seldom are aware. These now operate in the sons of Stubbornness. The great movements in the world, the great leaders, can find success only when they fall in line with unseen spirit forces.

The unbeliever is the sport, of the spirits of evil. It is the chief of the aerial jurisdiction who operates in them. Their wills are a compound of the soulish sensibilities of the flesh and the spirit of the world. The believer is not called upon to be passive, to "surrender", to "yield" as is so often taught, but that is what the unbeliever unwittingly does. That is what evil spirits crave. Intelligent subordination to God's revealed will is quite the opposite of a passive reception of passing impressions. The spirit of God does not produce such indefinite "guidance," such loose "leadings." God's spirit works only through His Word.

Our course is often dark, and we need light, not "guidance." With a light we can intelligently pick our path, and choose our steps. We are not called upon to obey an inner voice or an outward impression, or to blindfold our eyes and follow an unknown guide, but to use the light of revelation. Within us is the flesh and without us is the spirit of the world and the world of spirits. These are always forcing themselves upon us and producing "impressions." It is true that, if we know the Scriptures, the divine directions will, to a large extent, displace these sinister influences, but this comes through the activity of faith, not the passivity which blindly obeys impulses. God seeks open-eyed, active obedience. The forces of evil desire blind passivity.

To imagine that God has created a multitude of lesser deities, with wills absolute, so that they stray beyond the pale of His purpose, is to dethrone Him and dishonor every attribute and essence which defines deity. To give them the *consciousness* of self-determination is quite another thing. That His creatures should be oblivious of the power which impels them is essential to the exhibition of His love, for the response must be without conscious constraint. When we seek an agreeable environment we need no urging from without. But we do need pressing into circumstances which will prepare us for the fullest enjoyment of ideal conditions. So God is not depending on His implanted antagonism to bring men to Himself, but to drive them away, so that the rebound will usher them into His presence, the only environment in which man's will can ever be permanently comfortable and unconstrained.

Lately I listened to a sermon over the radio by one of the great preachers of England. One thought

was often reiterated. He insisted that Omnipotence itself, must knock at the door of the human will. But what sort of an omnipotence is this? Surely if it were orthodox omnipotence it could at least break open the door. But the omnipotence of Love would act otherwise. It might present itself before the door with objects of desire or it might set fire to the rear of the house. There are a million ways of entering a man's heart without using force. Give me control of all circumstances in any country and I will guarantee to regulate its religion, pattern its politics, change its thinking--in fact, do almost anything not too greatly at variance with its past.

Jehovah Elohim, Who sits supreme above the realms of time and space, is the only being in the universe unshackled by the chains of circumstance. Our versions have well-nigh hid the truth, but the highest and most powerful of earth's potentates gladly play the part He assigns them, though they know it not. The book of Esther is full proof of this. A simple circumstance, such as a sleepless night, reversed the king's plans to accord with God's. The wise man assures us that the king's heart in the hand of Jehovah is like a tiny rill of water with which the gardener irrigates his plants. He can run it whither he wills (Prov.21:1). Moreover, every way of a man is straight in his own eyes, yet Jehovah *regulates* the hearts (Prov.21:2).

In this connection I am reminded of the infidel who raised his hand aloft and dared God, if there be a God, to bring it down. It was a silly thing to do, for God wants hands raised against Him now and refuses to use force in compelling obedience. Yet God has other ways, quite as effectual and far more impressive, though ridiculously simple, for accomplishing His purpose. It happens that, in this case, the infidel was bald. And it also "happened" that there was a fly buzzing about. Just as the infidel had hurled his challenge, and stood waiting for an answer, the fly alighted on his pate and, without a moment's consideration, down came the hand to swat the fly! God had answered a fool according to his folly! It did not need omnipotence to answer his boast. It needed insignificant weakness.

The whole philosophy of "free will" is contained in this silly incident. The infidel was urged to his spectacular act by the desire for fame. This he inherited. He was impelled by the presence of an audience. He would not have "willed" to do this foolish thing when alone or in the solitude of a desert island. He doubtless thought he was "the captain of his soul." But he was only a cabin boy subject to a rope's end in the hands of Captain Forebears. The fly appealed to both of these factors. We have all inherited a sensitive skin and he was especially touchy where his hair should have been. This was not his "free will." No man wills to be bald.

So we see how easy it is to set the human "free will" against itself. He willed to hold up his hand, but the tickle of a fly was far more momentous in his life than the existence of God. The factors that formed the will to defy God were not so strong as the factors which produced the instant decision to destroy the fly. His will was set against itself and defeated itself.

One of the most soul-satisfying and spirit-soothing truths given to us is found in Paul's epistle to the Philippians (2:12,13): "Be carrying your own salvation into effect with fear and trembling, for it is God Who is operating in you to *will* as well as to work for the sake of His delight." If I thought that it devolved on me to originate and empower all the acts with which I hope to please Him, I would be utterly discouraged. While consciously I will to do many things that delight Him, I realize that it is really the operation of the spirit of God within cooperating with the word of God without. No independent, sovereign will can ever be in harmony with God. The bliss of the future will not arise from independence from, but freedom in, the divine despotism. Conscious accordance with God is the only liberty: freedom outside of this is only an illusion.

To sum up. There is only one independent "free" will in the universe, and that is the will of God. This will, during the eons, is manifest in two distinct ways, through nature and revelation. By nature mankind has been placed by God in an environment which leads it contrary to His revealed will. Naturally mankind's heritage from Adam disposes it against His manifest pleasure. This is God in nature working out his will in the realm of subconsciousness. In order to perfect His purpose men must not be aware that they live and move and are in Him. They must be oblivious of all but the fruit of His operations through their progenitors and in their associates. They must imagine that they are independent deities, well able to match their wits and wills with that of their Creator. This is the great democratic doctrine of "self-determination."

The false "free will" which men claim arises from ignorance of God's ways and of their own limitations. Not realizing that God is working against Himself in order to become known, they imagine that their will is independent of His. Not being able to analyze the intricate processes which underlie their own determinations, they delude themselves into thinking that each volition on their part is a creative act, indeed, far more than that, for creation is not, as commonly supposed, based on nothing. But man's will is itself a creature of circumstance and can be molded and shaped by the great Controller of Circumstances, to suit His own pleasure.

We, who know God, are no longer in the realm of nature, where, all the factors continue to oppose God. For heredity we have God's spirit within. For environment we have God's word without. The only function of our will is a negative one, for we find that we do not need an independent volition. More than that, we do not want our own way. Our cry is that of our adorable Lord, "Not My will, but Thine!" In His will we are free. All else is slavery.

The world is full of schemes to increase the power of the human will, and promises of vast advantage lure the ungodly to part with their self in order to gain ascendancy over their fellows. They are like the farmer who waters his weeds and cultivates his thistles. The will to win brought Europe to its present pass. It is a lurid illusion. But there is a method of cultivating will power infinitely greater and more mighty than any man's. There is a freedom of will far beyond our highest aspirations. It is found in renouncing our own self-determination and resting in the will of God. Let us earnestly acquaint ourselves with His purpose and fall in line with His plans!

How can this be done? The method is simple. We have God's spirit within. We have His word without. Let us make them our all. The factors which once formed our wills may be ignored. Let us assiduously cultivate the new factors. By His spirit, through His word, we have access to the will of God. This is now our will. Let us acquaint ourselves with it. Let us revel in it. Let us apply it. We shall then delight in the freedom of the great renunciation: *Not my will, but Thine!*



## **The Transmission of Sin**

HOW is it that Adam's sin has ruined the race? What is transmitted that constitutes all his descendants sinners? It is surprising how many discordant theories are offered in explanation of this fact. At least six are recognized by name in works on theology, yet it is admitted that not one of these is satisfactory. All are based on the misapprehension and mistranslation of a single phrase. Correct that, and the whole subject becomes luminous and difficulties vanish as the mists before the morning sun.

In Romans 5:12 we read that "through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death came through to all mankind, *on which* all sinned..." The usual rendering, "*for that* all have sinned," reverses the divine statement, and has led to a radical misconception of the truth as to sin, as a principle of action. The mistake is much the same as that made by evolution, which confuses creation with the present course of nature. It is true that death came into the world through one sin at the first, but it is not true that sin is the source of death to Adam's descendants. In their case it is *death* which is inherited, and this not only makes them sin once, but constitutes them sinners.

We can see the difference between sin as a single act and the principle of sin very clearly in Adam's case. Let us note most carefully the penalty which God attached to Adam's transgression. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Not a word is said of a change in his nature. All the penalty imposed was a twofold experience of death. The Hebrew for "surely die" is usually given as "dying thou shalt die." The present state of our investigations in Hebrew grammar leads us to render it "to die you are dying," which is certainly most concordant with the facts and the truth now being recovered. Adam was *dying*--the process which continued throughout his life; *to die*--the fact which was its climax at the close. This interpretation is fully confirmed, not only by the experience of Adam, but by that of all his posterity. Humanity is now a dying race. Their lives not only culminate in death, but they are vitiated by the gradual operation of death from birth to dissolution.

When Adam sinned and saw the sad consequences of his offense, why did he not cease sinning? Why did he not learn the lesson his one transgression taught? We find that Adam, instead of fleeing from further errors, made more mistakes continually. One sin does not, in itself, constitute a sinner, but the one sin of Adam evidently led to his becoming such. Death entered through the one sin, and *death* it was that made him a confirmed sinner. He no longer needed a temptation from without. He did not require a prohibition from God. All he did was done in error simply because he had lost the vital force which alone could keep him in the path of rectitude.

It is not *sin*, but *death* which came through to all mankind. All efforts to explain how sin came through, which do not recognize death as the medium of transmission, lead men to flounder in bogs and quagmires of thought from which the most eminent theologians have found no way of escape. Adam was not threatened with becoming a sinner if he sinned. He was warned that it would bring death. And this death it was that made him a sinner. So with his posterity. They inherit mortality, a dying which ends in death, a devitalizing process. They are born to die, and this it is which debars them from acts of righteousness. This it is which constitutes them sinners. This is the "depravity"

which makes men go contrary to conscience and against their nature.

It is not *sin* but *death* which "came through to all mankind." And this is not "for that" all sinned. Let us try to see the absurdity of this. Death, according to this, does not come until men have sinned. Yet an infant may die before it becomes conscious. The sinning spoken of here is the act, not the fact. To give the act of sinning as a reason why death came through to all mankind does not tell us how sin is transmitted. We wish to know why we commit this first act of sin and all those that follow.

This passage is often twisted to read, "for that all sinned *in Adam*." This may have some truth in it, but such a meaning cannot be extorted out of the words. It must be imposed upon them. "All sinned" is an exceedingly simple, self-evident statement, requiring no explanation, no theory to support it. Not so with "all sinned in him." This must be further explained by the doctrine of "federal headship" and involves endless problems concerning the age of responsibility, the "federal headship" of Christ, etc., etc. The phrase "for that" can never be legitimately extracted from the Greek words ON WHICH. They point to the effect, not the cause. All sinned because death passed through to all.

How simple and satisfactory when we read aright! Death passed through to all mankind, *on which* all sinned. *Death* is the channel of sin. Death came through to all mankind. All men are mortal. Sin is a by-product of mortality. The transmission of death by generation presents no problems. It is simply the lack of sufficient life, a deficiency in vitality, of all that flows from the life abundant. We are severed from the Source of life. Men are denied access to the tree of life. They are wanting of the glory of God.

Let us not miss the simple lesson and striking contrast found in Adam's first sin and in his subsequent life of sin. We know that the first sin came from without. But the temptation was not repeated. Adam probably would not have yielded a second time. Nevertheless, Adam kept on sinning. He made futile efforts to conceal his shame. He hid from Jehovah. He felt himself a sinner. No cause whatever can be found for this course except the words of Jehovah. The penalty of his sin was death. Death began its operation the very day he ate of the forbidden fruit. And this death it was which led him from one sin to another, so that sin was not merely an isolated act, past and gone, but a present fact, full of sorrowful insistence.

There is no scriptural warrant for any change in Adam's nature. God was very explicit. The thing at stake was *life*. It was not necessary to say to Adam that he would become a sinner, for that is involved in death. Adam became just like his descendants, once death had entered.

We all know that sin leads to death. But that the action is reciprocal, so that death is the cause, not merely of acts of sin, but of the practice and principle, which makes us sinners, has been practically lost to us because our translators gave it no place if they could help it. The apostle tells us that sin reigns *in* death (Rom.5:21), but they changed this to *unto* death, thus spoiling the sense and the figure at one stroke. Sin's sovereignty is not *unto* death but *in* death. Death is the sphere of its sway, the only territory which yields homage to its horrid tyranny.

Let us not lose the force of this figure. Where death is, there sin is supreme. The process of dying, which we call life, produces that predilection to err which is called sin, and puts all under the absolute despotism of Sin. Apart from a new *life* no sinner can escape servitude from this master. Hence we read the glorious contrast: "thus grace, also, should be reigning, through righteousness, for eonian *life* through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom.5:21).

We press the absolute tyranny of Sin in its own territory, death, not only for its own sake, but to impress the far more potent fact that Grace also is a tyrant, not one whit less securely seated than Sin. O, that the saints would only acknowledge its sway and bow to its beneficent despotism! We all

allow Sin's sovereignty, but how few glory in the Grace that utterly displaces it?

Once we have established the close connection between death and sin and the vital relation between life and righteousness, many a passage of Holy Writ will be suffused with added light. Life, eonian life, is practically synonymous with salvation from sin. Life and incorruption go hand in hand (2 Tim.1:10). Those whose names are in the book of life have no part in the second death (Rev.20:15). The resurrection of *life* includes deliverance from all the penalties and disabilities of sin. Life in Christ is all we need. Sin, sorrow, and suffering will cease for us when we are made alive. When death is abolished, sin in fact as well as in act, will be banished from the universe.

That which especially distinguished our Lord and Saviour from those about Him was the possession of abundant life. They were mortal, drifting to their graves. He was so suffused with life that He could lavish His vitality on others. Should they touch a leper, they would be unclean. His touch would cleanse the leprosy. So redundant was His vital force that He not only stayed the ravages of death before dissolution, but actually recalled a putrid corpse to life. The first Adam became a living soul; He was a life-imparting Spirit.

It is only as we realize that the intense vitality of the Son of God was the basis of His sinlessness and righteousness and holiness, that we are in a position to contemplate the awful significance of His death. As death was not operating in Him, He never should have died. Only His own voluntary act and the violence of His enemies could open the portals of death for Him. But it was not death alone but the attendant consequences which He dreaded. This it was that drew drops of blood from His brow, that set His will at variance with His Father.

By dying He was made sin. He had suffered from the sins of others, as He came into contact with their lives. But never could sin enter His own heart. He knew it not. He was to be made sin. How could this be? Just as sin comes to us through death, so He was made sin through His death. For three awful hours, while darkness shrouded the scene, He was abandoned by God, because of sin. The awfulness of this can never be realized by us, who have known little else but sin.

The suffering of the Son of God is not our subject at this time. All we wish to point out is the channel through which sin is transmitted. It not only comes to us through death, but so also it came to Him, when He canceled it. Christ was made sin, not in life, but in death. He could not even commit one sin, much less be made sin, while dispensing the life abundant. It was only as He laid it down at His Father's command, and entered the realm of death, that sin could touch Him. Thus it was that He was made sin.

The glorious harmony of this foundation truth with God's great ultimate will be apparent to all who believe in the abolition of death and the vivification of all. If sin can operate only through death it will surely disappear when death vanishes. It will have no channel through which to reach men and no sphere in which to operate. All that will be left of it will be the delicious relief of its absence, and the deep, abiding appreciation of the love that could use it to reveal its overwhelming tide of affection.

## **The Unpardonable Sin**

"Therefore I am saying to you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be pardoned men, yet the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be pardoned. And whoever might say a word against the Son of Mankind, it will be pardoned him, yet whoever might say aught against the holy spirit, it shall not be pardoned him, neither in this eon nor in that which is future" (Matt.12:31,32).

"Verily, I am saying to you that the penalty of all the sins shall be pardoned the sons of mankind, and the blasphemies, whatever they should be blaspheming, yet whoever should be blaspheming the holy spirit is having no pardon for the eon, but is liable to the penalty of an eonian sin"--seeing that they said, "He has an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:28-30).

"Now I am saying to you, that everyone whoever shall be avowing Me in front of men, him shall the Son of Mankind also be avowing in front of the messengers of God. Now he who is disowning Me before men will be renounced before the messengers of God. And everyone who shall be declaring a word against the Son of Mankind, it shall be pardoned him, yet the one who blasphemes the holy spirit shall not be pardoned" (Luke 12:8-10).

TWO STATEMENTS in the passages quoted above have been seized upon to prove that there is no salvation for those who blaspheme the holy spirit. These are, "the blasphemy of the spirit shall not be pardoned" (Matthew 12:31), and "the one who blasphemes the holy spirit shall not be pardoned" (Luke 12:10). These passages, we are told, utterly disprove the salvation of all (1 Tim.4:10) and universal reconciliation (Col.1:20). We are told that here are passages which we refuse to believe. To the superficial reader this seems to be true. But one who carefully examines the Greek, or even a concordant sublinear, will find that these passages do not by any means deny other portions of our God's infallible revelation.

First of all, anyone reading all of the passages attentively will see that the time of action is circumscribed. It is confined within the boundaries of only two eons. With considerable circumstance we are informed that the pardon is not possible-- neither in this eon nor in that which is future. This is in exact accord with the facts in other scriptures. Pardon has its place in the millennial kingdom and in its proclamation. The question of pardon does not arise at any other time. After that time is the great white throne judgment, when all unbelievers will enter the second death. Pardon can have no place in the new earth. At the consummation men are not pardoned, but justified. An intelligent study of the Scriptures will confirm the limiting of pardon, in this passage, to this eon and that which is future. There is no pardon in these for those who blaspheme the holy spirit.

The question now arises, Do the two statements which are not specifically confined to these eons contradict this limitation, or are they in harmony with it? The negative used is absolute, not relative. How shall we understand "shall not be pardoned?" In ordinary English, apart from any context, we

must admit that there seems no possibility of such a thing. We might argue that, as a matter of fact, they will never be pardoned, because they will be justified (Rom.5:18) and reconciled (Col.1:20), which is infinitely more. But this would not entirely satisfy, for those not accustomed to the accuracy of Holy Writ would mistake it for quibbling.

The real solution lies in the form of the Greek verb used, which we will now seek to make plain to all, even though they know nothing of Greek. The verb, in Greek, is divided into three great classes, as shown on page 19 of THE GREEK ELEMENTS, companion volume to the CONCORDANT VERSION. These are the *Indefinite*, the *Incomplete*, and the *Complete*. The first simply states a *fact*, as "the Son of Mankind has authority on earth *to pardon sins*" (Matt.9:6). Here there is no question of time, for the verb is indefinite. The last form, the *Complete*, tells of the *state* resulting from an action, as, "Child, your sins *have been pardoned* you" (Mark 2:5). The second form, however, the *Incomplete*, deals with an action in progress, as, "we ourselves, also, are *pardoning* every one who is owing us" (Luke 11:4).

The complete re-analysis of the Greek verb in the course of compiling the Concordant Version brought to light several facts which are not to be found in the usual grammars and lexicons. Among other things, it was observed that the *future forms, which have the endings of the incomplete, partake of the nature of this form, and speak of an action in progress, and limited to the time of the context*. All of these forms are distinguished by the ending --ING in the Sublinear of the Concordant Version. Therefore the passages which we are considering should really be rendered "shall not be being pardoned," as it is in the Sublinear. It is a pity that this cannot be readily carried over into the version. Yet all who have the sublinear, which should always be consulted in such cases, will have no difficulty in recognizing the incomplete forms, for they are always in --ING.

That the future form of the verb may be limited is evident from the fact that the *very same form (aphetheesetai)* is used in Matthew 12:31 and 32. Much patient investigation, and years of experience since this fact was first observed, have convinced the compiler of the CONCORDANT VERSION that *the Greek future with a negative is always limited to the time of action*. It does not deny at all times. If the reader will check this by the Greek or by the sublinear of the Concordant Version he will arrive at the same conclusion, and it will be a source of much satisfaction to him, for it really *settles*, and that conclusively, some most important questions. Above all, it allows us to believe *all* that God has said, and does not make us array one part of His Word against another.

How instructive and important this fact is may be seen from another passage. In John 3:36 we read, "He who is believing into the Son has eonian life, yet he who is stubborn as to the Son shall not be seeing life, but the indignation of God is remaining on him." The phrase "shall not see life," wrenched out of its context, has hindered many from an acceptance of God's glorious goal. This has its root in the mistranslation "everlasting," for, if eternal life is in question in one part of the sentence, then "shall not see life" can have no limits. But if *eonian* life is promised to the believer, an intelligent reader will see that it is eonian life also which the stubborn shall not see. And this is made absolutely sure by the form of the Greek future. It deals not with a fact but an incomplete, limited action. The context, the form of the verb, and definite declarations of God in other portions of His Word are in delightful agreement. If we take "shall not see life" as a fact for all time, we must clash with the context, we must ignore the form of the verb, and we must deny God's great assertions that death shall be abolished (1 Cor.15: 26) and that, in Christ, all shall be made alive (1 Cor.15:22).

It is glorious to be able to revel in *all* that God has revealed! We do not need to worry about contradictory passages. They do not exist! Only in our ignorance of the exactitude of Holy Writ will we bring up texts to bolster up our unbelief in God's glorious ultimate. To test such facts as these, let

us not fall back upon traditional scholarship. It has long been stereotyped and dares not acknowledge its own deficiencies. I have never seen a Greek grammar which clearly distinguishes between verb forms which are indefinite and those which are incomplete, or, in process. Nor do we ask anyone to rely upon our statement that this is so. With the Concordant Sublinear anyone can test it for himself, and rest his faith on the irrefutable facts.

Let each one who has the spirit of God judge: Shall we listen to learning which rests on its own reputation and refuses the facts, when this course brings God's revelation into hopeless internal conflict? Or shall we quietly consult that Word itself, as we are now able to do as never before, when such a course reveals to us the most exquisite harmony and complete accord? Were the Word of God a great hymn, as indeed it is, my ear could never bear the jazz that theology has made of it. But now that my heart has heard its heavenly harmony, and my spirit is inspired by its sweet symphony, it is torture to hear the jangling discords of hard and stubborn hearts, which, selfishly satisfied with their own safety, hope to make it more secure by condemning others to eternal damnation, thereby filling God's Word and His ways and His world with unbearable discord.

Therefore, we conclude that the sin against the holy spirit will not be pardoned in the time specified, the only time when pardon is offered, in this eon and in the next, according as it is written. (Moreover, it is concerned with the proclamation of the kingdom to Israel, and not with the present grace). The statements where this time limit is not directly included imply the same thing in the form of the verb. Consequently, the fate, after the next eon, of those who commit this sin, is not determined by these passages, but by other explicit declarations.

The sin against the holy spirit shall *not* be pardoned (Luke 12:10). It will be *judged*. Those who commit it will stand before the great white throne and will suffer the penalty imposed by our Lord for this sin. They will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Thereafter, when death is abolished, and all are made alive at the consummation, they, with all the rest of mankind, will be justified and reconciled to God through the blood of Christ's cross.

The crude reasoning that concludes that those who are never forgiven will never be saved is a good example of how reasoning from ignorance breeds unbelief and enslaves men in fear and utter despair. How many have morbidly imagined that they had committed this sin and spoiled their whole career! Those who bring it up as a proof that Colossians 1:20 is not true convict themselves of two crimes, the most devastating that men can commit--ignorance and unbelief so stubborn that it dares to pit one passage of God's Word against another and make Him a liar.

## **Sin's Justification**

IT seems incredible, at first thought, that any act can be both right and wrong. But when we see that the sinfulness of an act lies, not in the deed itself, but in its relation to those whom it affects, it is not difficult to see how any given action may be both good and bad. We can place almost any conceivable deed into two opposite environments and transform it from a crime into that which is commendable, and *vice versa*. Circumstances provide the moral clothing of human activities. The eating of fruit is often urged as an aid to health. And such it usually is. Yet this it was that introduced disease into the world!

No act is sin in itself. Under some conditions it may be right. In others it is wrong. A kiss is usually much more than just, but the kiss of Judas is among the basest of crimes. The morality of any deed lies not in the action but in its relation to those concerned with it. *Sin is relative, not absolute.*

It is no sin for the state to kill, even though it is often the penalty for the same act. There is no essential difference between an execution and a murder. Both define a violent death. But in one case it is done with due authority; in the other it is a defiance of the law of the land.

The great doctrine of justification consists in surrounding our sins with a divine environment in which they are not merely covered, or condoned, but actually transmuted into just deeds which will be vindicated before the bar of universal justice. How could it be otherwise? No earthly judge can vindicate a crime, or acquit criminal, or justify what he has done unless the circumstances of the case warrant it. Such a tribunal cannot justify, or make just, for it cannot modify or change the circumstances attending the crime.

A concrete case comes before me as I write. Quite a few years ago a convict, Daniel Mann, received the gift of God after his conviction. We will assume that he was guilty of manslaughter. At any rate, he was sentenced to death. Anyone acquainted with the grace of God would naturally desire to do something to save such a man from the penalty. I should like to be able to justify one before men who has already been justified before God.

But how could it be done? If the dead victim could be brought back to life and his temporary death proven to be an actual benefit to him as well as to all others affected by it, even an earthly judge would revise his decision. Why condemn a man for doing what eventuated in another's good, even if his own motive was bad and the apparent effects disastrous? No matter how much one man may hate another, no matter how much evil he may attempt to do to him, if he fails in his fell designs or is checkmated by another, no earthly court can convict him of the intended crime. Man is the sport of circumstance and circumstances are the servants of God.

So it is that God will deal with this deed. If the victim had, by some means, been restored to life, the charge would have been dismissed. This is just what God will do. He will raise him from the dead, and thus conclusively cancel the charge of murder. If the case had been reviewed as an attempt to do harm, the victim himself would plead for an acquittal if it actually resulted in good. The God Who has the power to raise the dead is not helpless in the smaller affairs of life. This dreadful deed, deserving of death, according to every human standard, has been stricken from the docket of the supreme court of the universe.

## THE STORY OF JOSEPH

Next to the cross of Christ, the story of Joseph gives us the clearest insight into the function of sin in God's plan and illustrates how a dastardly and cruel act may be justified when viewed in the light of His purpose. Joseph's brothers knew nothing of the famine which would come. They had not the slightest desire to fulfill the dreams which made the favorite brother their lord. Indeed, they wished to prevent the possibility of their fulfillment. So they conspired to kill him.

But this was not according to the purpose of God, so He put it into the heart of Reuben to deliver Joseph, with the hope of returning him to his father. Yet this, again, was not in line with God's plan, so He sent the Midianites and put Judah in the way of making some profit out of the transaction. So Joseph was sold into Egypt. Is it not a sad and sordid scene of sin? Plotting to slay their own flesh and blood because of his dreams! Actually accepting twenty pieces of silver for the darling of their father's heart!

Joseph besought them and was in anguish of soul, but they would not hear (Gen.42:21). Jacob, their father, rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days, and refused to be comforted, and said "I will go down into sheol unto my son mourning." Thus his father wept for him. And later, when they wished to take Benjamin to Egypt, his heart wailed forth the lament that is among the saddest in the annals of sin: "My son shall not go down with you: for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!" How tragic were the consequences of this sin in the eyes of Jacob may be seen from his own words. "*Me* have ye bereaved: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin: *all these things are against me.*"

So it appeared. And so it appears to us when tragedy stalks into our lives and robs us of our friends or our wealth or our health and leaves us helpless. *All seems against us*, when, if we only knew God's mind, we would see that *all is for us*.

There is a blessed future for which all our trials are a preparation. Nay, the very sins of men are material in His hands with which to work out their salvation. A God Who can accomplish His ends and bless His creatures only when they obey Him and fall in line with His revealed plans, would have little opportunity to act in this evil eon, and would be submerged in sin and rebellion. It is the glory of God's wisdom to harness His unsuspecting enemies to His purpose, and use their opposition to prosper His plans.

How triumphantly Joseph greets his brothers! What a marvelous insight into God's ways was granted to him! Instead of harboring a grudge against them for their treatment of him, instead of condemning them for their cruel conduct, he reassures them. "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: *for God did send me before you to preserve life*" (Gen.45:5).

Here we have the divine side of this sin, which is, after all, the *actual* truth in regard to it. Apparently, his brothers were "responsible" for his exile in Egypt. But, had they known that this would only further the fulfillment of his dreams, they would never have done as they did. Their motives were all wrong. Their sin was grievous. But their act was actually good. It was so good that God claims it as His own.

As his brothers are not fully consoled, Joseph repeats the great truth: "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So it was not *you* that sent *me* hither, but God..." The plain inference seems to be that, if Joseph had not been sent into Egypt their lives would have been forfeited to the famine. Egypt itself would have succumbed, and the countries about would have sent in vain for sustenance. All the promises to Abraham and to Isaac



and to Jacob would have failed if Joseph had not gone down to Egypt.

Is there another act in the lives of the patriarchs so vital to their welfare, or so essential to God's glory, as this sin? What good deed of theirs compares with it in its beneficent effects? The marvelous truth stands forth sharp and clear. *The sending of Joseph into Egypt was actually God's act, absolutely necessary for their salvation. Yet that very act was apparently a heinous crime against God and against Joseph and against their father Jacob.*

As a sin it apparently greatly wronged Joseph and seemed to rob Jacob of his beloved son. As the act of God it made Joseph the saviour of the world and preserved Jacob and all his sons and their families from starvation.

All this looks as if we are lauding sin, as though we were saying "Let us do evil that good may come." In reality it is quite the reverse. In practice it prevents sin. Whenever the grace and wisdom of our Saviour God is extolled, men are not wanting who think they would take advantage of His love if they believed it. But when it grips their hearts they lose all desire for the license which it is supposed to give. Their amazement at His wisdom reveals the folly of any attempt on *their* part to justify sin, and they have no inclination to put Him on trial.

The effect of this truth on the future is indescribably grand. Eternal, irremediable, omnipotent sin is a conception so terrible that it threatens the sanity of anyone who dares to give it earnest consideration. Yet, even if we see God's power to cope with sin, in most of our minds we picture it as an ineradicable stain on the universe forever. We imagine that its evil effects will linger eternally, and that we shall look back with sorrow and regret that it was ever allowed to enter the creation.

Such a cloud will not darken our sky at the consummation. Sin spells sorrow and suffering now, and it is well that it should. But then not only some sins, but all sin will be justified. It will not, like the sale of Joseph into Egypt, save mankind from a famine of physical food, but from that greater lack, ignorance of God, and give them a realization of the appalling power and wonderful wisdom which are at the service of His dauntless love.

This simple story supplies the answer to the difficulty which some experience in believing that God does evil (not sin) in order to accomplish good. We are often accused of teaching that "we should be doing evil that good may come" (Rom.3:8). Here we have an evil act which brought about much good. But we recognize that this good was attained only through the direct operation of God. Apart from this the sin of Joseph's brothers would have produced nothing but suffering and death.

*We* should not do evil and trust blind chance to turn it to good. It is almost impossible for a man to do evil and not sin. He has no control over an act once it has occurred. Even a good deed, done with the best of motives, may lead to disaster. All we can do is to commit our actions to the hand of God, Who alone is able to guide them to a happy outcome.

But shall we thus limit God? Paul spoke of *us*, not *Him*. That God does evil is so often taught in the Scriptures that we feel like apologizing for insisting on a fact so plain on the face of revelation, notwithstanding that others seem to think that we are slandering Him when we believe His words (2 Kings 6:33; Neh.13:18; Jer.19:3; 21:10; 32: 42; 36:3,31; 39:16; 40:2; 42:17; 44:2,11; Lam.3:38; Ezek.14:22; Micah 1:12). And anyone who will note carefully will see that, when *He* does evil, good always results. All the evil He brought upon Israel was for their welfare.

A good deal has been made of the sin of rejecting God's word. Indeed, there are some who would question whether eternal torment applies to any except "Christ *rejectors*." Sir Robert Anderson was one of these. So we may be sure that obstinacy or stubbornness is one of the most fatal of sins. But

the Scriptures do not make the division which theology has attempted, which brings in a host of difficulties. How much light must a man have before he is a rejector? If he hears one clear gospel message, is that enough? What is a "clear" gospel message? Some of the "heathen" have never heard of Christ. If they "hear" of Him, does that make them eligible to eternal torment, or must they hear a given formula to be doomed forever?

To what ridiculous shifts are we driven when we embark on a theological investigation! In the Scriptures, the *amount* of light is not in question. *All* men have some illumination, and all are declared to be obstinate or stubborn. This, we submit, is the greatest evil under the sun. Yet God has no hesitancy in declaring that *He* brought this upon them. "For God locks all up together in stubbornness..." (Rom.11:32). In their own consciousness, of course, they think that they have a right to think as they choose. It is not according to God's purpose that they should be conscious of His control. Now why is this evil done? "That He may be merciful to all" (Rom.11:32).

Joseph's brothers did evil, yet God meant it for good. We do evil, yet God will transmute it into good. Yea, even when we sin, grace superabounds. But we do not sin to tempt further grants of grace, neither should we do evil in fond expectation that it will eventuate in good. As we shall show, evil and sin have their limits, beyond which they would not react to the welfare of the creature or the glory of God.

How foolish if Joseph's brothers had reasoned as some would have us do today! They should have said, "If it turned out such a great blessing to throw Joseph into a pit and sell him into slavery, why, let us assassinate him now, and perchance it will turn out even better than our previous sin." What madness would this have been! Yet that is precisely the difference between believing that God can and does do evil to evolve good, and saying "Let us do evil that good may come."

At first Joseph's brethren would look back on their treatment of him with mingled feelings of sorrow and joy. Sorrow for their own sin, for the sufferings of Jacob and Joseph. Joy for their salvation from starvation, for the restoration of Jacob's long lost son and for his exaltation. But when they realize that God justifies their act by making it the source of blessing not only for themselves but for Jacob and Joseph as well, all regrets would vanish, though their condemnation of themselves would increase.

The treatment of Joseph by his brothers is a precious type of the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Joseph's brothers did not actually kill him, even as Abraham did not slay Isaac, but in both cases there was the intent of the heart, which is what counts with God. The brothers typify the nation that brought Christ's blood upon their heads. Jacob represents the Father, and Joseph is the Son.

It must be noted that the only ones who suffered unjustly because of this sin are the ones who did not commit it. Jacob had no hand in the crime, yet he suffered from its effects. The loss of his son caused anguish of heart which but feebly reminds us of the awful gulf which separated the Father and His Beloved at Golgotha.

In Joseph we see the suffering Saviour. Far from having any part in the sin of his brothers, he is the spotless victim who suffers most of all. But his suffering is for their sin, not his own. And it is essential to the justification of his brothers, for it is only through his distress that God works out the happy result, which vindicates their act. They are not justified through the blind unfeeling forces of providence happening to counteract the normal results of sin. They are freed from all guilt through the vicarious sufferings of Joseph, who did not deserve, yet endured, the consequences of their sin.

They deserved banishment from their father's house: Joseph bore it. They deserved to lose their liberty: Joseph languished within prison walls. They deserved to suffer: Joseph endured it.

So let us freely acknowledge that there is a temporary element of injustice so far as Joseph is concerned. The brothers never could do anything to justify his sufferings. If God can justify his brothers He needs must do something to justify himself as regards Joseph.

Hence Joseph is exalted to the second place in Egypt. The suffering of Joseph leads to the justification of the sin of Joseph's brothers. The exaltation of Joseph leads to the justification of God in laying the burden of their sin on him. However much he may have suffered in the pit and in the prison, how happy he must have been to become the saviour of his family! And when all was done, he himself would be first to justify God for the anguish and distress which brought so much blessing in its train.

So we see that the sin of mankind can be justified through the suffering of a Saviour, and the apparent injustice to the Saviour is fully compensated by God Himself in awarding to Him the highest place at His right hand.

Current theological expressions have done much to drag down our conception of the "atonement." The very term atonement, so freely used, betrays the spiritual poverty of those who use it. In this type, the sufferings of Joseph, his absence from his father's house, may be said to have covered or concealed the sin of his brothers for the time. But what is that compared with the uncovering of the sin and its justification? There are phases in which this greater grace is the very opposite of atonement.

The commercial view of the "atonement" barter so much suffering for so much sin. Christ is said to have died "in our room and stead." There is no need to explain how one Man could suffer in such quantity, or how anything beyond mere negative escape from judgment can come of such a "transaction." The death of Christ was not in our stead. The appropriate preposition is not *anti*, *INSTEAD-OF*, but *hyper*, *OVER*, *on behalf of*.

If Joseph had suffered in the place of his brothers, that would not only have been a great injustice to him, but it would have left them in the land, doomed to starvation, no whit better off than before they sinned. But since, under the guiding hand of God he suffered *for* them, it led, not merely to a release from the penalty of their sin, but to a great deliverance from the great evil which was impending over all. Through his trials they were justified and he was glorified, and they were glorified in him.

O that this simple story of Joseph, "the saviour of the world," as the Egyptians named him, might help us to higher thoughts of the salvation which is ours in Christ Jesus! We are always seeking to make His "atonement" a means of getting ourselves out of sin. God has much higher thoughts. He is going to get untold grace for us and ineffable glory for Himself out of sin, May our Saviour speak to us as Joseph did to his brothers, when they were burdened with their crime: "So it was not *you*... but *God*."

## **The Repudiation of Sin**

THAT Christ appeared to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" will seldom be denied. It is in the Bible, and, in a diluted form, is not infrequently met with in religious literature. The obvious teaching of the words, which is fully supported by the context, is that the sacrifice of Christ is of such surpassing efficacy that sin, the fact, the principle, not the mere act, is to be "put away" or repudiated. It is our purpose to inquire more accurately as to the significance of this expression by studying its principal terms and by harmonizing its scope with the context in which it is found.

Such a satisfactory thought, so stupendous an assertion, is too much for the human heart, so the main occupation of expositors has not been to expound it, but to impound it within the narrow confines of their creed. We shall merely mention the main methods used to limit the scope of this passage, lest its glorious light should illuminate our hearts. It is usually referred to the believer and his sins. It is supposed to be the effect of the sacrifice of Christ on sin at the present time. Others, seeing how unsatisfactory such explanations are, prefer to refer it to the sin offering, as superseded by Christ's death.

A careful study of the word "sin" in the later Greek scriptures will show that it is not used of the sin offering, as is the case in Hebrew. Not only is this evident from many of the passages, but it is put beyond question if we consider those places where the sin offering really is referred to. Then it is either a sacrifice (Heb.5:7) or offering (Heb.10:18) for sin, or a special phrase "concerning sin" is used (Heb.10:6,8). In these cases the Authorized Version has felt justified in supplying the word "sacrifices" or "offering." It was necessary to make this distinction clear to the Hebrews, though they were well aware of the fact that "sin" was used of the offering in their scriptures. Since this is done in every other passage, we have no ground for giving "sin" a special meaning here.

The doctrine of the repudiation of sin at the conclusion of the eons is the scriptural solution of one of the grave problems which perplex many when pondering God's connection with sin. Not knowing that sin is essentially error due to the operation of death, and that God could introduce it without Himself making a mistake, and can justify it and will repudiate it when its mission has been accomplished, men seek to rescue Him from any connection with its advent, even robbing Him of His deity and sovereignty and foreknowledge in order to do so. Indeed, they supplant Him by a more powerful anti-god, not of His creation, nor subject to His throne.

Reconciliation calls for more than the mere cessation of sin. Sin has wrought such terrible havoc in the hearts of some of God's creatures that its mere absence will not suffice to win their affection. The relief will be great, but the remembrance of its distress will rankle, unless it is both repudiated and justified. At that time God will show how essential sin was in the past and how non-essential it is for the future. It will be justified by its results. It will be repudiated because it will not only be unnecessary for any further revelation of God's heart, but positively subversive of God's glory and His creatures' good.

Even those who have the most superstitious reverence for the Authorized Version will hardly excuse the rendering of Hebrews 9:26. "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared..." cannot be explained on any rational grounds. Christ has appeared, but it certainly was not at the end of the

world. The American Revisers change this to "the end of the age," which is very much better, so far as the word eon is concerned. But it is open to the same objection. The eons have not by any means ended even yet. Christ did not appear at either "the end of the world" or "the end of the ages." And, we may add, sin has not been "put away" in any plain, intelligible sense. Even in the believer the principle of sin is present. We cannot say that it has been "put away," unless we limit it to faith's apprehension of our position before God, and this is a Pauline doctrine, quite foreign to the teaching of Hebrews.

The American Revision suggests the word "consummation" for "end" in its margin. The CONCORDANT VERSION has "conclusion." As this is an important point, we will give the evidence in full. "End" is the usual mistranslation of *telos* FINISH, which the CONCORDANT VERSION renders "consummation." But the word here used is enriched by the prefix TOGETHER. Literally it is the TOGETHER-FINISH, or *conclusion* of the eons. Only by studying all its occurrences will we be able to fix the full meaning of this term conclusively. It is used elsewhere only in Matthew's account, and always in the phrase "the conclusion of the eon." The passage before us differs only in the fact that, instead of the singular "eon," we have the plural "eons." If we can discover the relation which the "conclusion of the eon" bears to a single eon, we will be able to determine how the "conclusion of the eons" is related to all of the eons. The following are all of the occurrences:

Matt. 13:39 Now the harvest is the conclusion of the eon.

:40 thus shall it be in the conclusion of the eon

:49 Thus shall it be in the conclusion of the eon

24:3 And what is the sign of Thy presence and of the conclusion of the eon?

28:20 And *lo!* I am with you all the days till the conclusion of the eon!

Heb. 9:26 for the repudiation of sin at the conclusion of the eons.

We must clearly distinguish between the *consummation* and the *conclusion*, the FINISH and the TOGETHER-FINISH. The former is the final crisis, a mere point in time. The latter is a concluding period which closes at the consummation. The present eon will have a some-what protracted season at its close which is compared to a harvest. It will include the judgments of the end time, as detailed by our Lord in His parables of the darnel of the field and the dragnet (Matt.13:37-43,47-51). The next eon will also have a judgment season at its end. The character of these periods is not pertinent to our present study. All we wish to press is the fact that *they are extended periods of time*, not a sudden crisis, like the consummation.

In this light "the conclusion of the eons" becomes clear. It is not equivalent to that final, finishing, culminating, completing crisis called the consummation, which cannot come until the eons end. It is in the eons. It is their concluding portion. And is not this just what we would expect in such an epistle as Hebrews? Like all the Circumcision writings, it is strictly limited in its scope to the eons.

The epistle to the Hebrews deals only with the Circumcision aspect of the work of Christ. It does not concern the nations and the evangel for them today. Mixed with present truth it creates confusion. Kept separate it enlightens us as to the holy nation and God's dealings with them in other eras. In the ninth chapter Christ is presented as the Antitype of Israel's chief priest and the sacrifices offered every year in order to keep the nation near.

## THE TABERNACLE, A TYPE OF THE WORLDS OR EONS

The tabernacle and temples are types of future spiritual realities, and indicate the way of access into the presence of a holy God. The tabernacle typified the pentecostal era. Solomon's sanctuary prefigured the millennial day and Ezekiel's house points to the new earth. Yet their general arrangement does not change. Each has a court, a holy place, and a holiest of all. In their common system we seem to have a type or illustration of the various worlds or systems and the corresponding eons or ages.

Indeed, the tabernacle is distinctly related to the cosmos or world when we read of a "worldly sanctuary" or holy place (Heb.9:1, AV). The same form of phrase is used of the two holy places as we find in connection with the eons. Both together are called "the holies of the holies" (Heb.9:25). The inner shrine is called "the holy of holies" (Heb.9:3). These correspond exactly with "the eons of the eons" and "the eon of the eons." They will serve not only to explain these phrases, but suggest a more intimate relation.

The tabernacle and temple system divides the world of space into divisions which correspond in number and character to the worlds and eons. There are five in each, and in the same order, which are marked with striking features of correspondence. Both give us the way to God, one for the individual sinner, the other for the race. All, of course, is confined to the terrestrial viewpoint, for no tabernacle or temple can possibly illustrate the immediate and unhindered access which characterizes the ministry of the conciliation for the present grace.

The five divisions essential to the tabernacle system are, (1) outside the camp, (2) within the camp, (3) the court, (4) the holy place, (5) the holy of holies. These readily divide into three, and two, for only the last two are in the tabernacle itself, and are called the "holies of the holies" just as the last two worlds or eons are distinguished by actual entrance into the sphere of God's presence, and are called "the eons of the eons."

Very little, indeed, is said about the world without the camp. The same is true of the first eon. Like the vast stretches of space which surrounded the encampment of the favored people lies the long vista of time which formed the first world or eon. Still there are suggestive hints which link them together. We were chosen in Christ before the disruption, that is, in the first world or eon, for the disruption was at its close. And our place is outside the camp of Israel. In space as well as time we are dealt with on quite distinct lines.

The tabernacle and temple system never reaches back to the first eon. It is always *from* the disruption. So it had no jurisdiction beyond the confines of the camp. It is essentially, in both time and space, an eclectic, exclusive, limited arrangement, just as Israel's place in the eonian times.

The second world or eon, from the disruption to the flood, is the scene of sin, with no means of covering or cleansing. So the camp was peopled with sinners whose only recourse was to go through it into the sacred enclosure, if they wished to approach God or settle for their sins.

The third or central division is the court of the tabernacle, which is certainly most suggestive of the present world or eon. The brazen altar, that supreme type of the death of Christ, reminds us that this present world or eon has been hallowed by the great Sacrifice, which also makes it possible to enter into the holy places beyond. In this eon, wicked as it is, is the true Laver for the cleansing of all defilement. True, the full effect of the altar and laver have not yet been felt, but that is because we have not entered into the holy places. These figure the future eons.

The glory of God is not revealed in the court, but is hid behind a curtain and rough coverings. Neither has God revealed His glory to this world or eon. But in the millennial era there will be at least a partial revelation of His magnificence. The furniture of the holy place, the lampstand,

the table of show-bread and the golden altar are all beautifully typical of Christ Himself in that eon, and of the portion which will be enjoyed by the saints of that blessed day.

There will be light--divine light--quite the opposite of the present, when dense darkness covers the earth, and men know no light except that of the sun. The knowledge of God will fill the hearts of His people and cover the whole earth. Such is the suggestion of the seven branched lampstand in the holy place.

The table with its twelve cakes or loaves of bread are also most unlike the present with all its divisions and lack of spiritual sustenance. A united nation will enjoy God's provision in His presence.

The golden altar of worship will waft its sweet incense aloft throughout that eon of blessing, such as never before had been known. The psalms of praise will find their full expression when David's greater Son rules and presides as the great Priest of His people.

But the holy place is not the holiest of all. There is still another curtain which hides such majesty as is reserved for the very highest manifestation of God in this system. The same is true of the corresponding eon. The millennium is by no means the last of the eons or the most glorious. That is true of the next eon, the day of God. And the most notable feature of that surpassing era is the presence of God Himself, just as it is the crowning glory of the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple.

The path into the presence of God is the common object of thought in the arrangement of the eons and the tabernacle type. The distinction between them is like the difference between the titles Elohim and Jehovah. One deals with the problem from the standpoint of time, the other sees it in space. Jehovah is the eonian God. He made the eons the highway of time leading the race into the presence of the Shekinah. Elohim arranges a perceptible, material system with the tabernacle structure at its center, to teach the same truth. No marvel that there is so notable a correspondence between them.

A very important lesson may be learned from the terms used to describe the holy places. When dealing with the eons we are often told that "the eons of the eons" is an effort to express infinity, "ages tumbling on ages," "ages on ages," etc. If we transfer these expressions from time to space, we may more readily see how little ground there is for such explanations. "The holies of the holies" is not to be understood as "holies tumbling on holies" but holy places made preeminently holy in relation to other holy places. All inside the court was holy. But the two places inside the building were "holies of holies"--the most holy of all.

"The holy of holies" is commonly and correctly understood as a single holy place. Why should not "the eon of the eons" be a single eon? The preeminence of the holy of holies lies in its relation to the other holy places. So the preeminence of the eon of the eons lies in its being the fruitage and harvest of the preceding eons. The confusing translations and expositions which hide the truth of the eons from us would never be tolerated if they were applied to such tangible objects as the tabernacle and temples.

We read that the chief priest entered into "the holies of holies" (Heb.9:25). Most of the manuscripts read simply "the holies," or holy places. Only the editor of Sinaiticus preserves this reading. So unusual and difficult a reading might easily be dropped, so that very little evidence is needed to establish it. When we compare this phrase with the parallel one of the eons--the eons of the eons--we cannot but be struck with its aptness. Just as the last two eons are "of the eons," so the two holy places are "of the holies." They are the most hallowed of all the holy places, among which we certainly must include the court, if not the camp, which had a measure of sanctity, certain sacrifices

concerned with sin being burned outside its precincts.

Just as the altar of sacrifice was the place at which sin was dealt with, so the sacrifice of Christ was the time when sin was repudiated. The brazen altar was in the court, and Golgotha was in the present eon. Had the sinner been able to enter the divine presence in those days, in his approach to God he would leave sin at the altar, and it would no longer be in view for the conclusion of his path to the tabernacle, and through the holy places. So it is that sin is repudiated for the conclusion of the eons. This conclusion commenced when Christ was made the Sin Offering. Had not the nation rejected the heralding of the kingdom, there would have been only a short time until the presence of Christ, just as there were only a few strides to the door of the tabernacle. When He is on the scene sin will be suppressed as it has never been before. His reign will banish it from the earth.

### REPUDIATION

The rendering "put away" is sometimes stoutly defended. It is only necessary to give a list of all the varieties of renderings of this word, in its four forms, to convince anyone that it is neither exact nor full. This form of the word is a noun and is rendered *disannulling* (Heb.7:18) in its only other occurrence. The verb uses many terms, such as *reject*, *despise*, *frustrate*, *bring to nothing*, and *cast off*. Another noun is rendered *wicked*. The adjective is both *unlawful thing* and *abominable*. That all may study these for themselves, we give a complete concordance of the Authorized Version renderings of the verb and the noun here used.

#### Authorized Version, *atheteoo*

Mark	6:26	he would not <i>reject</i> her
	7: 9	ye <i>reject</i> the commandment of
Luke	7:30	lawyers <i>rejected</i> the counsel of
	10:16	he <i>that despiseth</i> you <i>despiseth</i> me, and
	--	he <i>that despiseth</i> me <i>despiseth</i> him that sent me
John	12:48	He <i>that rejecteth</i> me, and receiveth
1 Cor.	1:19	<i>will bring to nothing</i> the understanding
Gal.	2:21	I do not <i>frustrate</i> the grace of God:
	3:15	confirmed, no man <i>disannulleth</i> ,
1 Thes.	4: 8	therefore <i>that despiseth</i> , <i>despiseth</i> not man,
1 Tim.	5:12	they <i>have cast off</i> their first faith.
Heb.	10:28	He <i>that despised</i> Moses' law
Jude	8	defile the flesh, <i>despise</i> dominion

#### Authorized Version, *atheteesis*

Heb.	7:18	verily a <i>disannulling</i> of the
	9:26	to <i>put away</i> sin by the sacrifice

Anyone who reads these passages with any attention will see that it is not a mere unemotional setting aside, or putting away, but includes a conflict of feeling. This we have tried to express by the renderings *repudiate* and *repudiation*. Substitute the proper form in each case and it will be evident



that it is always more appropriate, besides fitting all of the passages. The point here is not merely the elimination of sin, but a manifestation of God's aversion for it. He deals with it in such a way that His detestation is displayed. In the terms used by the Authorized Version, He *rejects, despises, frustrates, casts off* sin.

This view of the repudiation of sin is in close accord with our discovery that it is due to the operation of death. The eons of the eons are the scenes of life. At their beginning all who are Christ's will be vivified. A large proportion of earth's population in the millennial era will be immortal. Hence they cannot sin. The abundant vitality of the last two eons is the basis of sin's repudiation.

In confirmation of the exposition here presented, the argument of Hebrews proceeds to set forth the two appearances of Christ, once bearing sin and then apart from sin, once as suffering and then as Saviour. The time of these is clear. One refers to the cross, the other to the kingdom. The salvation spoken of by the prophets, the national redemption of Israel, always includes the repudiation of sin. This is what leads to the political righteousness and world-wide peace of the millennial era. Sin, in all its forms, will be frowned upon, whether in principle or practice.

The repudiation of sin is but one of the lower notes in the chord which will ultimately fill all creation with its eternal harmony. Reconciliation could not be apart from righteousness, vivification without the cessation of sin. Sin, as we have seen, cleaves to those who are dying. Were no one dying there would be no sin. So, when all will be vivified, when death is abolished, sin must be utterly absent.

That glorious consummation will be based on a full vindication of God's connection with sin. The fact that He has used it to carry out His gracious purpose demands also that His attitude toward it be fully manifest, lest His creatures imagine that He approves of it and proposes to give it a permanent place in the universe. This is the charge which is brought against us now, when we acknowledge that all is of God. But such an impression will not be possible during the last two eons. Indeed, it is quite possible that we are on the very threshold of the great judgments which show God's attitude toward sin.

This has been aptly illustrated by means of a blackboard. It is desirable that the background for the use of white crayon be perfectly black. So long as it is only gray there is not sufficient contrast to display the white lettering. It will pay to apply coat after coat of paint to achieve this end. More than this, however, is a useless waste. Paint an inch in thickness is no blacker than a thin film. So God is painting a dark background for the display of His grace. This much is necessary. More than this is useless and repugnant. The two eons that are nearly past, suffice for the background. The greatest, display of grace has been accomplished. Judgment now impends, which will show that God does not delight in sin, whatever use He may make of it. The very necessity for the repudiation of sin shows that it was included in His procedure, and plays a part in His purpose.

## **The God of Judas Iscariot**

GOD is the real subject of divine revelation, rather than man. Whatever He has told us in His Word concerning any of His creatures is primarily a disclosure of Himself. The characters in the Bible receive all their value from contact with the Deity, and reflect His glory, not their own. This is not difficult to apprehend in the case of those whom the Great Potter uses as vessels of mercy. Our knowledge of God is put to its supreme test when we consider His connection with the vessels of indignation. Perhaps no case of this kind is more typical than that of Judas Iscariot. God has told us much concerning him which ought to lead us into a better appreciation of Himself. To be sure, the subject is shunned, because it seems to cast a somber shadow across God's glory, and leads into distressing difficulties. But these arise from false teaching, from current superstitions and not from a knowledge of His Word.

Long before Judas was born, David, by the spirit of God, made several very definite predictions concerning him (Psa. 69:25;109:8). He was to acquire a piece of property, but neither he nor others were to dwell in it. He was to have the place of a supervisor, but it was to be taken from him and given to another (Acts 1:16-20). I doubt if Judas knew that these passages referred to him. Nevertheless, in all fairness, the question may be asked, *Was it possible for Judas to avoid fulfilling these Scriptures?* Could he have made void the Word of God? If these passages referred to the reader of these lines, how would he feel about it? Is it right for God to bring a man into the world under such a handicap? Centuries before he was born, Judas' fall was fixed. It was inevitable. Not Judas himself, nor the whole nation of the Jews, which he represented, nor all the powers of earth or heaven could keep him from betraying His Lord, or from buying the Field of Blood, or from losing his place as an apostle. *God had spoken.* His doom was inevitable.

Judas was one of the "elect" in a very special sense. Our Lord said "Do not I choose [elect] you, the twelve, and one of you is an adversary?" (John 6:70). Christ knew from the beginning who would give Him up (John 6:64). Did He, therefore, warn Judas of his awful danger? Did He put him out of the apostleship? Did He do anything, so far as the record goes, to save him from his terrible fate? Did He allow Judas to suspect what He thought of him? At the very close, just before Judas went out, when the Adversary had already put it into his heart to betray his Teacher (John 13:2), our Lord gave Judas the morsel with His own hand. This act was usually considered a special token of esteem. By such a sign our Lord indicated to John who it was that was about to betray Him. Judas was not helped.

Can we not picture the scene? The eager disciples are altogether perplexed by their Master's assertion that one of them should turn traitor. Not one of them guessed that it was Judas. Does not this show that the betrayer had done nothing out of the way, so far as they could see? Indeed, they had honored him by making him the treasurer of their little band. He was a thief (John 12:6), but outwardly he must have been rather exemplary to pass so long as one of the twelve apostles. Our Lord knew what he was about to do. What did He say to stop him? "What you are doing, do more quickly." Does it not seem almost incredible that our Lord actually hastens him on his dreadful deed?

(John 13:27).

Foreordained by God, one would suppose that Judas was born with the evil urge in him which should lead to his downfall. But this was not the case. It was true that he was not clean, as the other apostles were clean (John 13:10-11). Nevertheless, the impulse to lift up his heel against the One Who fed him (John 13:19) and to betray Him to His enemies did not come from within, but from without. Let us be clear on this point. *Judas, by himself, would not have betrayed the Christ.* It was put into his heart by the Adversary (John 13:2). And again the question arises, Could he have helped himself? It was because his heart was *not depraved enough* that the incentive had to come from without. The great Adversary could not trust him to do it of his own volition. Our Lord knew what was in his heart, but does not lift His finger to deter him from his awful deed. Rather, He hurries him in the doing of it.

It is a remarkable fact that Satan does not, as a rule, enter into, or "possess" human beings. Demons make a practice of doing this. It is a pity that "the devil" has been confused with "the devils" in English versions. Otherwise the fact that Satan entered into Judas would stand forth, as it should, as a most notable exception. The facts are clear. Judas, by himself, would not have betrayed Christ. The arch-enemy did not entrust the task of coercing Judas to the hands of evil spirits or demons, as would ordinarily be the case. He will employ such demon spirits at the time of the end to mobilize earth's kings for the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14). But this most important task Satan did not leave to others. Contrary to all precedent, he himself entered into the apostle and transformed him into a traitor (Luke 22:3).

We do not wish to make out that Judas was a saint, or that he was not a sinner like other men. In fact, we wish to add this to the influences of which he was the victim. He was a thief. So we may well suppose that the money he received for his treachery had some weight in inducing him to transgress. The question is, whence came this tendency to covetousness? Did he acquire it after "the years of accountability", or was it born in him? Was it within his power to escape it? Like every other man, he was a son of Adam, and, without having any choice in the matter, he inherited mortality and sin and condemnation (Rom. 5:12,18), the lot of all mankind. If any reader of these lines has escaped this tendency to sin, let him cast the first stone. Otherwise let him forbear.

Let us now count up the forces which were for Judas and those which were against him. He doubtless had a conscience, for, when he realized what he had done, he not only returned the money, but his regret was so overpowering that he took his own life. This should show us what Judas himself thought of his transgression. His own estimate of the sin that he had committed was that he had forfeited his right to live. Had he been free to choose beforehand, would he have done this deed, which he regretted to the death? This regret seems to have come naturally out of his own heart, without exterior constraint. We are not told of any special visitation of God's spirit to bring on this change, to correspond to the entrance of the Adversary, in order to make him sin. Judas himself, naturally, sinner though he was, had an utter abhorrence of his own treachery.

But what of the forces against him? We have seen that his inheritance from Adam was not sufficiently bad to compel him to commit such a capital crime. So the Adversary cast it into his heart (John 13:2). This is a strong expression. It was no mere suggestion, which could be repelled. The heart is the very center and core of our being. Out of it are the issues of life. But still stronger is the expression, "Satan entered into Judas" (Luke 22:3). Practically, the man was displaced. He was not

acting naturally or normally. He was not doing what Judas would do, but what Satan would do. To be sure, if God's spirit had entered him first, then Satan could not have come. But God's spirit had not then been given (John 20:22). No mere man, by the power of his own spirit, can withstand the great prince of darkness. Judas was utterly powerless to prevent his entrance. He was an involuntary tool in the hands of one much mightier than himself.

The only One Who could withstand Satan, and Who could have prevented his entrance into Judas, knew all about his plight, but did not make the slightest effort to rescue him. Our Lord had cast out many demons from strangers, but now that one of His own apostles is under the power of Satan himself, He makes no attempt to expel him. On the contrary, immediately after Satan had entered, He said, "What you are doing, do..." Can we imagine Judas' impressions? His Lord singles him out for special attention, and seals it with a dainty bit of food. Straightway he receives an irresistible urge to go out and arrange to give Him up. Before his conscience can act, he hears the voice of his Lord. Surely He knows his heart and is about to expose his treachery! But no, *Christ also urges him to go!*

Why was it that our Lord gave him no helping hand? How could He send him away at such a time for such a deed? Was He not, in effect, also against Judas? Did not Judas, as one of His chosen apostles, have a special claim on His favor? Under normal circumstances, would we not expect Him to guard these men who had cast in their lot with Him? That He did this is evident, especially in the case of Peter. Satan claimed the right to sift all the apostles, as the grain is sifted from chaff. Yet our Lord besought that Peter's faith should not be defaulting (Luke 22:31,32). As a consequence Peter was not allowed to go as far as Judas, due alone to the intercession of Christ. In His marvelous prayer, our Lord avers: "When I was with them in the world *I* kept those whom Thou has given Me in Thy name, and I guard them, and not one of them perished except the son of destruction, *that the Scripture may be fulfilled* (John 17:12).

Here is the secret of our Lord's apparent callousness. His every act was conformed to God's written revelation. God had spoken. Not even pity could move Him to do anything to hinder the divine decree. That is why He rather hastened it. That is why He deliberately chose an adversary, and made no effort whatever to save him from his fate. But was our Lord really callous? Did He enjoy having such a character among those near and dear to Him? Acquiescing in God's foreordination, He seldom spoke of it, for no one else knew about it and, of necessity, it could not be made known before the event. It was not at all ideal to have a man like Judas about. Christ suffered much from contact with outsiders, hard hearted scribes, hypocritical Pharisees, faithless Sadducees. Among His own close companions and constant attendants, the only possible ideal would be unswerving loyalty, unstinted devotion.

We earnestly beg the reader to consider the facts we have presented and test them by the Scriptures. Many may be tempted to cry, "Blasphemy!" Many may insist that God could not do these things, no matter how clearly the Scriptures seem to certify them. But these matters are so set forth that they cannot be misunderstood. The fact that they are shunned shows that it is not a question of understanding but of believing. These facts are in our Bible and will stay there whether we accept them or not. They should help us to see that there are depths in God which we have not fathomed. They should show us that there is something radically wrong with our theology when we cannot bear these "hard sayings" or do not exult in these "dark sayings".

Only once does our Lord bare His heart in relation to Judas, and that just at the crisis when Satan enters into him, and he goes away to give up his Lord. Here again Christ falls back upon the fact that the Scriptures must be fulfilled. "The Son of Mankind is indeed going away according as it is written concerning Him, yet woe to that man through whom the Son of Mankind is being given up! Ideal were it for Him if that man were not born!" (Mark 14:21, Matt. 26:24). Here He was, with the twelve, just before His sufferings, and He wished to pour out His heart to them. Alone with them in the upper room, the conditions seemed ideal. But His sensitive spirit knew that they were not ideal. One of the twelve hindered these sacred revelations. That one must be removed before He can speak freely. So Judas is told to go. Then His heart is relieved. Fondly calling the eleven "little children" for the first time, He utters the wonderful words as we have them in the fourteenth to seventeenth chapters of John's evangel.

In all four of the accounts of our Lord's life, the first mention of Judas Iscariot is accompanied by the statement that he is the betrayer. He was chosen with the rest of the twelve. We know the compassion of our Lord. How the very sight of Judas must have disturbed Him! Eleven true, trusting hearts. Why not unmask this one false intruder and remove him from his office? It was written! Evil, such as this, must be borne, or the Scriptures cannot be fulfilled. But the conditions certainly were not ideal. A potential traitor is no apostle. Christ, no doubt, rejoiced in the honors He would confer on His faithful band, in the kingdom. But He must also have shuddered at the prospect awaiting one of them. How much it would have saved Him if that man had not been born! If Matthias, who was also with them, had been in his place from the first, His heart would not have been burdened by the state and fate of Judas Iscariot.

The usual translation, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born," has no foundation in the Original. In examining various translations, we must always bear in mind that the tendency to translate in accord with accepted theology is so overwhelmingly strong that a very little evidence on the other side is practical proof of the correctness of any unpopular translation. This is an excellent example. It is well known that the Revised Version margin is more dependable than the text, especially where the reading of the Greek is given. All will recognize how impossible it would be to get a two-thirds vote of the Revision Committee in favor of confirming this text to the Original. Few men who would do such a thing would be chosen for such a task. Yet there were a few who were faithful, and these succeeded in putting the truth into the margin: "Good were it for him, if that man had not been born."

In such passages as these we can realize the benefits of an exact concordant version. What was *good* for the Son of Mankind, and what was *ideal*, are two distinct ideas. I have no doubt that, at bottom, it was good for Him to have Judas, if we understand by "good" that which will work out the most blessing in the end.

The sphere of the word "good" is very wide and its force here is difficult to define. But the Greek word *kales*, "ideal", limits the thought to that which reaches our highest conception of perfection at the time. Twelve faithful apostles would be ideal for Christ, though one traitor was doubtless among the all things that worked together for good. So we may even be justified in saying that the birth of Judas was *good*, but not *ideal*, for the Son of Mankind.

Whatever may be our estimate of Rotherham's Emphasized Version, we may be quite sure that, at first, he made little attempt to pander to public opinion. The character of his translation makes his

testimony of special weight in a matter of this kind. He was not concerned about the language so much as the sense. He renders it, "well would it have been for him, if that man had not been born."

Two translations used by Roman Catholics have this text correctly turned. The Douay version of Matthew 26:24 reads: "it were better for him, if that man had not been born." Dr. Leander van Ess, in his German version, renders it "for him were it better, such a human were never born".

### LUTHER'S VERSION

Luther's version, by itself, is proof that the Concordant Version rendering is right. Though the Greek is precisely the same in Matthew and Mark, he renders it correctly in the former and twists it in the latter. May we ask, if it really read, good were it for *Judas* if he never had been born, would Luther, or any other translator, make it read, good were it for the *Lord*, if Judas had not been born? Never! But Luther reads (literally): "it were better for him that the same human never were born". In Mark 14:21 he renders the same words: "it were better for the same human that he never were born".

In the context immediately preceding, the identity of those referred to is fixed beyond question. It may be set forth as follows:

<i>Him</i>	<i>that man</i>
(The Son of Mankind)	(Judas)
The Son of Mankind is indeed going away, according as it is written concerning <i>Him</i> .	Yet woe to <i>that man</i> through whom the Son of Mankind is being betrayed!

Ideal were it for *Him* if *that man* were not born!

If it had read "Ideal were it for *that man* if *he* had not been born (as usually mistranslated) then both would refer to Judas. But no unprejudiced reader of the English or the Greek can possibly refer the *Him* to anyone but our Lord, Who is so termed in the preceding sentence.

But if all the translations ever made rendered the passage incorrectly, that would not prove anything except human fallibility -- which is already proven. The Original speaks of the Son of Mankind as *Him* and of Judas as *that man*, and makes it clear that it were ideal for *Him* if *that man* were not born. The real cause of this mistranslation is the hardness of the human heart. On the one hand, who has been concerned with the feelings of our Lord and His distress at having the traitor in His company? Even his saints seem utterly unable to sympathize with Him in this trial. On the other hand, they have allowed a just indignation at Judas' dreadful deed to degenerate into vindictiveness, and attribute to our Lord the harshness of their own hearts. In judging Judas they have condemned themselves.

The Scriptures show the utter helplessness of Judas. How could he flee from his fate? Not only were the powers of evil against him, but the powers of good were just as determined to make him play his part. God Himself had determined the role he should have, and Christ, the only Savior, must act in accord with the divine decree. I beg my readers not to evade the issue. Let them put themselves in Judas' place. What can a mortal do when Satan and Christ and God all force him to commit a deed so awful in his own eyes that it drives him to desperation and death?

It may help if I confess that I once feared to face this issue. I tried to find a way for God to get out of this dilemma. The idea that He could make vessels for dishonor (Rom. 9:21), and then punish them eternally was incredible. And I was right. God could not do such a thing. My mistake was to disbelieve God's plain statement and all the evidence which sustains it in the Scriptures, because I had accepted a false theology in regard to His future dealings with these vessels which He fits for destruction. Since I now know that God will not only deal justly with them, but lovingly, I am able to believe God, and glorify God, and exult in the God Who remains Love, even when He hardens and hates.

### **THE FUTURE OF JUDAS ISCARIOT**

We have considered Judas' past, and now we will consider his future. All are agreed that Judas has committed a crime which can have few equals in the annals of mankind. Therefore he must be judged for his sins, more particularly for this supreme sin of his career. For the sake of simplicity we will focus our attention on this one act alone, for all else that he did sinks into insignificance compared with this. All are agreed that he must be judged for giving up his Lord, but all are not agreed as to when and how. At least four different answers have been given, which may be tersely stated thus: He must burn on, burn out, burn up, or burn through. For him there is eternal torment, or purgatory, or annihilation, or he must go through severe judgment to ultimate reconciliation (Col. 1:20).

### **JUDAS TORTURED ETERNALLY**

According to the most popular view Judas' full career would read something like this: Foredoomed by God, long before he was born, to betray the Messiah, chosen by Christ Himself to be the traitor, he proves too weak to perform his part, so Satan takes control of him until he has done the deed, and, driven by remorse, he takes his own life. As punishment he has been suffering in the flames of hell ever since and will continue to do so until the judgment of the great white throne, more than a thousand years hence. Then he will be tried and condemned to anguish unspeakable, above all other men, for a never-ending eternity in the lake that burns with sulphur, miraculously kept alive to undergo his agony.

We have tried not to exaggerate. Yet the plain statement seems so fiendish, so utterly and horribly repulsive that one wonders how sane human beings can bear to think of it. The fact is they do *not* consider it, or, rather they *dare* not face it. If they did they would lose all faith in a god who is such a hateful, hideous monster. First he fixes Judas' fate, foretells it long before, then gives him a place among the apostles, with the brightest of prospects, then refuses to shield him from Satan, until the dastardly deed is done and he dies a self-inflicted death. I repeat, Judas could no more help himself than a piece of straw in a tornado. Not a person who reads these lines could have done differently, had he been in Judas' place.

And now, for doing what God forced him to do in one short hour he is to suffer woe utterly beyond human conception for all eternity! Such is the idol worshiped by Christendom. We have shuddered at the awful caricatures of the deity which men carve out of wood or stone, but none of them can compare with the revolting and hateful fiendishness which coerced Judas to do wrong and then expends infinite power in torturing him, and works an eternal miracle to sustain his life so that he is able to survive his sufferings.

It is not Judas who suffers most from this terrible travesty of justice, but the God of Judas. This is intensely practical. The apostasy of these days is largely the result of such terrible teaching. It has led to the virtual repudiation of the deity of God, and of those passages which represent Him as the great Potter, Who fashions vessels for dishonor, adapted to destruction (Rom. 9:21-22). The doctrine of eternal torment dethrones God. Only an inhuman fiend can really hold to His absolute sovereignty and torture everlasting. Acts speak louder than words. If God deliberately creates to doom and damn, it is useless to insist that He is Love. Black is not white, nor darkness light, neither is hate love. Judas will not *burn on*.

### **JUDAS IN PURGATORY**

I know but little of purgatory, but I remember, when I was in the Sistine Chapel in St. Peter's, in Rome, the guide explained that the worst offenders went right straight to hell, below purgatory, whence not even the pope could recall them. So I imagine that Judas' sin could not be "burned out", and he does not come within this category. Judas will not *burn out*.

### **JUDAS JUDGED AND ANNIHILATED**

The revolt against the awful injustice of eternal torment has led some to conclude that Judas is to suffer *punishment*, not *punishing*. That is to say, death is unconsciousness, and Judas as a part of his penalty, will be cast into the second death, from which he will never emerge. This, evidently, is a great relief to anyone who has God's name at heart. Judas, according to this, knows nothing until he is roused from the dead at the great white throne. As a result of that judgment he will return to death in the lake of fire, and that is his end.

Again, I insist, I am not so much concerned for Judas as for Judas' God. If this solution is true, He will lose His reputation through His dealings with the betrayer. It will be just a sorry piece of business in which His great Name will suffer severely. It will take away the very foundations of His throne. Every righteous creature in the universe will agree with me that it is unjust of Him to place one of His creatures in a position where he must sin, and then not only punish him for it, but blot him out of existence. Judas will not gain. God will not gain. It will be a total loss, and God will be the prime loser. Moreover, God Himself has never said that this is His solution. It is only a reaction from eternal torment, a deduction of reasoning rather than a matter of faith in actual divine declarations. Judas will not *burn up*.

### **JUDAS JUDGED AND RECONCILED**

With hearts sickened by the contemplation of human injustice, as applied to Judas Iscariot, we turn with joy to God's own righteous and loving revelation. With bowed heads we acknowledge Him as the Potter, the Deity Who does what He does, Who needs not give account of any of His actions to His creatures. It was just and good of Him to doom Judas to be the betrayer of Christ, for this was necessary to reveal the depths of human depravity and the lengths to which mankind can be led when in the hands of the Adversary. This humbling knowledge needed to be set forth by a concrete example. So the Potter formed a vessel for dishonor, and destroyed it when its work was done. Such was Judas in the past.

### **THE JUDGMENT OF JUDAS**

What of his future? He is dead, and awaits the judgment day in utter oblivion. God is just, and does



not hold Judas a prisoner for thousands of years before bringing him before the bar. To his consciousness, the moment of his death will also be that of his resurrection, and his judgment will immediately follow. Let us try to enter into his sensations. The last sight he has had of his Lord, was when Christ was *condemned* (Matt. 27:3), and was being bound to be led before Pilate. The first sight he will have of Him when he awakes will be as the *Judge*, upon the great white throne. What a tremendous contrast! Even before his death his regret had led him to return his ill-gotten gains and take his own life. Now that he stands before the august Judge, against Whom he has so grievously sinned, what more will be needed to convict him, or show him the heinousness of his sin? Will it not be unutterable anguish for his soul?

Recognizing the utter helplessness and irresponsibility of Judas, some may be tempted to deduce that he deserves no further infliction whatever. But this is another extreme, false as the first. We must always keep in view God's great purpose to reveal Himself and to bless His creatures. Judas is a public character, just as Pharaoh was, and all creation will judge of God as He judges Judas. Simply to pass over the betrayal, or any sin, transgression or offense, would be false to His own standard of justice and fatal for the future. All sin, and every evil deed, must be judged and condemned, and the appropriate penalty inflicted. The only escape lies in the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, and this is only for believers, not for unbelievers who appear before the great white throne. Sin must be judged, not simply for the sinner's sake, but for God's.

Sin must be *judged*. Men are so unjust and their laws and tribunals so corrupt that we have lost the great truth of judgment. As a consequence the word *judgment* has been practically replaced by *punishment*. Men imagine that the whole end and aim of God's dealings with them in the future is to make them suffer for their sins. But God has already done much in the way of judging, and invariably He has had an end in view. His judgment eras have always been beneficial for the world. The deluge washed the earth of its iniquity. The judgment period now impending will cleanse it for the kingdom. The judgment of every creature is a necessary preliminary to salvation and reconciliation.

Some have supposed that judgment is intended to be a deterrent, so that those who have tasted the bitter fruit of sin will never offend again. This would be a very flimsy foundation for the future. It is contrary to human experience. A man who has served a sentence is not immune from temptation. He is more likely to fall than others who have never been behind the bars. God's judgment is preliminary to a life in which there can be no sin. Sin is due to death working in us. When there is no death and all are made alive it will be impossible for them to sin. Sin and death go together. Life and incorruption go hand in hand. Judgment is not needed as a deterrent for the future. But it is a necessary preliminary to the glory of God and the bliss of His creatures.

The principles of God's judgment are given us just where we should expect them -- in the opening argument of the Roman epistle. He will be paying each according to his acts. There will be indignation and fury, affliction and distress on every human soul which is effecting evil (Rom. 2:9). This agrees perfectly with the solemn announcement at the great white throne: "And the dead were judged by that which is written in the scroll, in accord with their acts" (Rev. 20:12). It is not for us to judge Judas or to determine the severity of his afflictions. We may rest assured that the One Who sits upon the throne will not mete out a mite more or less than what is right, not only in His own eyes, but before the whole universe, and Judas himself. When did Christ, Who sits on the throne, ever do aught else? Let us rejoice that the judgment of Judas is in the hands of One Whom we all can trust.

*He* knows Judas, and is able to sympathize as well as condemn. Thank God that *He* is the Judge of all!

But this is not the end of Judas. His name is not written in the book of life. Hence, once more, he will enter death -- his second death -- until the consummation comes. There is no knowledge in the death state, hence, for Judas, the period of the second death has no conscious existence. Even as the moment when he lost consciousness in the past will be followed by the moment of his resurrection, so also the second death will form no part of his experience. The whole of the long last eon, called "the eon of the eons" in the Scriptures, will pass without his knowledge.

### THE SALVATION OF JUDAS

God has declared that He is the Savior of all mankind, especially of those who believe. Up to this time in his career Judas has known nothing of God as his own Savior. He has been in His hands as the Potter, and was made a vessel for dishonor. As such he has been destroyed. He knew Christ as his Teacher, when he was one of the twelve apostles. Later, at the great white throne, he meets Him as Judge. But as Savior He is still unknown to Judas. And only a Savior is of any avail now. Judgment does not save the one judged. The afflictions he endures during his second life, between his resurrection and his second death, give him no claim on God or His blessing. Salvation is only of God, through Christ. God has lost Judas, and He alone can save him, on the basis of the blood shed on Golgotha (1 Tim. 4:10).

Along with all mankind, Judas has fallen into condemnation through Adam. But the God of Judas has made it clear that Adam's one offense has its counterpart in the obedience of Christ. Just as he was condemned on account of Adam's act, so will his life be justified on account of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:18). Up to the time of his second death Judas has not known God the Justifier.

God has declared that death shall be abolished. That, as in Adam all are dying, so in Christ, all shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). Judas died in Adam. But, when he is in the second death, he has not yet been made alive in Christ. If he had been made alive in Christ he would not be in death at all. The God of Judas must not only become his Savior, but his Life (2 Tim. 1:10).

Originally, Judas was created in the Son of God's love (Col. 1:16). He was created in Him long before he was in Adam. If his place in Adam brings him so much shame and condemnation, such a surplus of suffering and death, how much more will his earlier position in the Son of God's love bring him salvation and life, justification and reconciliation! What he received from Adam came to him without his consent. No faith was required. He did not need to make it his own. Neither will it be necessary for him to believe or accept or struggle for that which will come to him because he was in the Son of God's love. How can he do any of these things when he is in the second death?

*God's Word is true.* Death *shall* be abolished. All mankind shall be saved and justified and vivified. All creation shall be reconciled. And Judas will not be left out. It is quite impossible for us to realize what this will mean to him, condemned, destroyed, alienated, twice dead. The God of Judas, at the consummation, will become his Savior, his Justifier, his Vivifier, and his Reconciler. Is it possible for us to imagine the relief, the joy, the ineffable exultation which will be his when he realizes that sin and enmity and death are all past forever? When he sees that, though for a fleeting moment he was a public vessel for dishonor, God was not sealing his eternal doom, but preparing him personally

for a deep appreciation of His future gift, will he not worship and adore Him for it all?

The God of Judas, Who hardens hearts, Who molds vessels to display His indignation, did not begin His work with Adam, neither does He end it at the great white throne. He commenced with Christ and He will conclude it at the consummation. Adam, with his black burden of condemnation and death, is only a parenthesis in God's revelation. We must not judge God's work by it alone. Adam is not the Alpha of God's ways, and we must not make him the Omega. Judas was not only in Adam, in Eden, but in the Beloved Son in creation. He will not only be judged because of his inheritance from the first man, but also be saved because of his earlier union with the Second.

God does not call Himself the God of Judas, because doom and judgment are His strange deeds. They are temporary and terminable activities. The time is coming when there will be no more doom (Rev. 22:3). Then it will no longer be necessary to harden a king's heart to resist God's will, and thus reveal His power. Satan will never again enter a human being to turn him against God, as in the case of Judas. Evil exists only in the times of the eons, and doom is confined to the first four. It has no place in the last eon, when God tabernacles with mankind. Judas is, perhaps, the best example of doom that Scripture gives us. In considering his case we must emphasize the fact that God does not deal so with His creatures at all times. It would be difficult to justify His course if it were His normal and eternal procedure. It is exceptional and temporary. But its lesson is everlasting. The temporary pain will lead to an eternal gain to the creatures of God's heart.

### **THE GLORY OF GOD**

No man is "responsible" for his own birth. "To be or not to be" is not a problem for a creature. The Creator has kept such matters under His own control. Hence He alone is "responsible". If it were good for Judas never to have been born, the only one to be blamed is the One Who alone could foresee his career and prevent his birth. Yet He, on the contrary, predicted his course and made his birth inevitable. God's Word would have been found untrue if Judas had never been born. Hence it was good for God that Judas was born. And what glorifies God is always a blessing to His creatures. It is good for us that Judas was born. And, in view of God's glorious ultimate, we may be sure that Judas himself will praise and adore God for giving him birth. The words in our popular versions are utterly false. It would *not* be good for Judas if he had never been born.

We have well nigh lost the true idea of deity. We speak of God as "allowing" this and "permitting" that, as though He could not help Himself. We have forgotten that He is Elohim, the great Disposer, Who works all according to the counsel of His own will. We refuse to believe that *all* is out of Him. As a result we are timid when called upon to face the facts in the case of Judas, for we fear for the God of Judas. If Judas is eternally damned our fears are justified, for he will drag down with him the Deity Who predicted his career and doomed him before he had been born. But, if Judas is eventually saved, all of these fears are groundless, and we can look into the face of God unafraid, with holy awe, as we bow in submission and acquiescence to His will. Some day we will see that the terrible tragedy of the present will issue in the unspeakable glory of the future.

Leaving Judas' own fate out of the matter, what about the future of the God of Judas. Shall this man be an eternal eyesore in His universe. Shall God's glory be eclipsed forever by His dealings with the traitor. He claims to be Love. Is it love to doom and condemn the helpless. Justice is the foundation of His throne. But how can He justify His condemnation of Judas before he had even been born. His

wisdom can cope with any problem. Then why did it fail in Judas' case. Every attribute that adorns the Deity is called into question if Judas is eternally lost. His is a test case. Declarations are empty unless accomplished by deeds. If God's acts deny His words He will lose the confidence of all His creatures. It is not Judas' fate, but God's deity which is at stake.

But the love of God *is* wise. The case of Judas will prove it, not deny it. By saving one who sinned so fearfully, God's affection for His creatures will be displayed, not eclipsed. And the love of God is just. In justifying one whose hands were reddened with the blood of the great Sacrifice, His righteousness will be revealed, not violated. Judas' dreadful deed was committed under the very shadow of the cross. Who dares to limit the value of the blood of Golgotha, to confine the abiding efficacy of that august Sacrifice. God has made it the basis of reconciliation with *all* (Col.1:20). He has the ability. He has the wisdom. He has the love. And He will do it! Adored be His holy Name!

## **God's Will and Intention**

IN translating the ninth of Romans, verse nineteen, I felt almost as if the text before me was faulty. It should surely read "who hath resisted His will?" Yet the word is not *will*, but *intention*. There seemed so little difference, at the time, that I did not appreciate the concordant rendering myself. Since then I have been most thankful for it. It helps to solve one of the deepest difficulties and contradictions connected with the place and problem of evil. To the question, Who hath resisted His will? we may answer, *Many*, if not all. But to the query, Has anyone withstood His intention? the reply is the opposite, for *no one* can thwart Him. Even when withstanding His will we are fulfilling His intention.

There are not many passages in God's word like the ninth of Romans. Seldom are we taken behind the scenes into the realm of the absolute. Much in this chapter *seems* to contradict other portions of the Scriptures, because they deal with processes, as seen by man, while this is concerned with causes, known only to God. God has a goal. In order to reach it He must have had absolute control from the beginning. All the intervening process, no matter what it may appear to be to men, must be the working out of His original intention. He is the great Potter. His creatures are clay. This is true only in regard to God's intention. Viewed in relation to His will they are not at all the passive material suggested by the clay. "Ye will *not*" describes man's antagonistic attitude toward God's revealed will.

The case of Pharaoh is the classic example of the chasm between God's will and His intention. His revealed will was very plain. "Let My people go!" It seemed to be fulfilled in the liberation of Israel. But no one who reads the account and believes it can escape the conviction that God's intention included more than His revealed will, and that it involved opposition to that will. This much might be easily inferred if Pharaoh had been hard-hearted enough to play his part. It is put beyond doubt by the action of God in hardening his heart.

God's revealed will was limited to the release of Israel. His intention was to display His own power and glorify His name in all the earth. This is given us as a specimen of His complete purpose and of the process by which He will attain it. Mankind does not comply with His will, His saints do not comprehend His intention. Yet He uses both the opposition and the ignorance to effect His object. No doubt many in Israel were fervently praying that Pharaoh's heart would soon soften, and he would let them go. God's answer to their prayer was to harden his heart. They sighed for salvation. He wrought with a view to His own glory.

It takes little imagination to picture this scene. Its continuous repetition during the first three eons makes it most important to our spiritual welfare. The same conflicting forces are at work today. It is quite conceivable how the saints would have managed the affair. They would have implored Jehovah to compel Pharaoh to let them go. Perhaps they would call a grand Prayer meeting for this purpose. Perhaps they would set aside a week of intercession. "We know not what to pray for" was as true of them as of us. Perhaps they would be "definite" in their petitions, and insist that He melt the heart of the king, and so remove his opposition.

How much there is of this today! The saints unite in great "world movements," seeking to soften the

heart of mankind, trying to do away with sin, seeking to abolish the many evils that harass us, uniting against war and vice and corruption, for all of these are against the revealed will of God. These efforts, we are told, are *practical*. They are not mere theory, words without works. Of what use is such an article as this, for example, to stem the tide of iniquity? Using the same figure, I would advise all that the tide will be the highest in all history, and that no human effort will be able to stop it, for it is necessary to fulfill God's intention.

The Israelites hoped Jehovah would soften Pharaoh's heart. What they wished was to quietly slip out of Goshen into the promised land. They wanted none of the terrible signs. They did not ask for the passover. Surely they would not have entered the trap which threatened to destroy them. They did not ask for the miraculous passage through the Red Sea. The forty years in the wilderness was not of their choosing. The most illustrious epoch in their history was forced upon them. It was a continuous exhibition of disobedience to God's will. Yet who doubts for a moment that it was in line with His purpose?

Now that all is past and we can get a true perspective of these events, who would prefer to have Israel's prayer answered? It was not necessary to soften Pharaoh's heart. It was too soft already. If it had not been hardened the exodus would have been a flat, uninteresting story, with no outward manifestations of Jehovah's power or love. Its glory would be gone. Its God would be unknown. The wisdom and power of Egypt must be exposed by conflict with the wisdom and power of God. His attributes must be revealed by contrast with the mightiest and wisest of humankind.

The antitype of this marvelous period of Israel's history lies just before us, only the miraculous manifestations will be far more wonderful than of old. God is today hardening the world's heart in preparation for that epoch. Men are approaching the wisdom of ancient Egypt in their knowledge of nature, and are far surpassing it in power. Shall Jehovah weaken them before using them as a foil to display His might? Rather it is His wisdom to harden their hearts, so that, in opposing His will, they may fulfill His ultimate intention.

It is obvious that God could not reveal His intention. He could not tell Pharaoh that, while He asked him to let the people go, He really did not Want Him to comply, but desired to use him as a foil for the revelation of His power. This would actually make a mere machine of him. It was the ignorance of God's ultimate object which made the whole procedure real to the actors in it. They did not by any means feel or act as mere puppets, notwithstanding that each and every one was doing precisely what was needed to accomplish God's aim.

Too often we are told that, if man has no free will, he is a mere automaton. This is a mistake. The so-called "freedom" consists merely in the lack of *conscious* coercion. Being ignorant of the constraining or restraining influences which determine his conduct, and altogether unaware of ulterior forces, he subconsciously *yields* at the very time that he imagines he is most independent. His freedom of will is simply ignorant unconsciousness or submission to environment or heredity.

In relation to the will of God, men are consciously independent. They can accept it or reject it, and imagine that no other force but the divinity enthroned within them has anything to do with their decision. But when we find the niche assigned them in God's intention they are (thank God!) the most utterly dependent slaves of circumstance it is possible to imagine. It will be found that, throughout their lives, they were no more masters of their fate than they were of the date and details of their birth.

The doctrine of man's free will peoples the earth with a race of puny gods. We object to the dual gods of Persia or the many deities of the Greek and Roman pantheon, yet these ancient pagans never

rose to the absurdity of making every man a god. The possession of a free, untrammelled, unconquerable will is the exclusive attribute of deity. Only One God can possess it. Our blessed Lord Himself did not claim it. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who had sent Him.

The failure to recognize both of these aspects of divine revelation has led to incalculable confusion and misunderstanding. Those who reject God's intention rob Him of His godhood and deify man. Those who confuse His intention with His revealed will make of Him a love-lacking tyrant, a hard-hearted monster. Others, who wish to believe all the Scriptures have to say, are not clear how to harmonize His character with the presence of sin, especially when it becomes evident that sin has a place in the attainment of His ultimate purpose.

It seems most reasonable, at first thought, that God's will must be fulfilled in order to reach God's goal. We imagine that any infringement of it forever forfeits any share in His ultimate purpose. But further reflection will show that God's intention must be attained, not only through submission to His will, but also through opposition to its express commands. The highest expression of God's wisdom lies in His ability to transform every effort against Him into that which is not only favorable to His plans, but essential to His purpose.

All evil and every sin reverses its character completely when we take it from the limited light of God's revealed will to the universal illumination of His intention. This is the reason that we do not hesitate to believe the Scriptures that all is of God. No sin remains such when completely illumined by His intention. It is a failure, a sin, and subject to dire penalties when man commits it, but it is no longer a mistake when it finds its place in God's purpose. The same act which brings shame and dishonor on the creature, when subjected to the divine alchemy, is transmuted into a source of glory and peace to God.

Such general observations are apt to be dismissed as bordering on blasphemy. But let anyone take the great sins in the Scriptures and ponder all their aspects. Each one is essential to God's plan. But it is better to be specific. Pharaoh is the great sinner in this scene. He is the one who opposes God's expressed desire. Make him willing or compliant with God's command, and what is left? In that case God would have failed in His object. To avoid this He finds it necessary to stiffen the opposition. *Jehovah hardens Pharaoh's heart in order that he may sin against Him!* Some insist that God cannot have such a close connection with sin. They would prefer to fix the blame on Pharaoh, or on Satan. But, while Jehovah directly causes Pharaoh to sin, *by doing so He Himself avoids failure or sin.*

Any lack of discrimination when speaking on these themes is likely to cause confusion. The same statement may be both true and false. Two directly contradictory assertions may both be true or both be false, according as they are related to God's will or to His intention. A beloved brother, who had been meditating on these things, made the statement that Adam's "fall" was really a fall upward. I would strenuously object to such a suggestion, apart from an explanation. Adam's sin and transgression and offense were very bad and degrading when viewed as disobedience to God's will. When associated with the work of Christ and God's ultimate purpose it was the very best he could have done. Even its immediate effects were not all evil, for he obtained a knowledge of good, impossible in his previous condition.

So with sin as a whole. We almost dread to speak of it in relation to God's ultimate, for few, even of His beloved saints, have seen behind the scenes, and almost any assertion would be false if related to His revealed will. Is sin good? *No!* It is the worst thing in the world. No words can express our horror and detestation of it. Is sin good? *Yes!* Not, indeed, in itself, but its effect will be beneficent

beyond anything else this world can give, when combined with the mediatorial work of Christ and the reconciliation of which it is the occasion.

Perhaps this is why some beloved brethren insist that I teach that God sins, or is the Author of sin. I have never said this or even thought it, so far as I am aware. If I have unwittingly done so, I humbly retract and recant. But I am informed that various passages in my writings on this subject imply it, though they do not express it in so many words. When I review these passages, I do not see the implication. I did not intend such a thought. I did not express it. To my own consciousness, I did not even imply it. Some inferred from the apostle Paul's teaching that they should do evil that good may come. If *he*, could be misunderstood, I count it an honor to be in the same condemnation.

But what is an implication? Is it not the result of combining what we think with another's statement? It is reasoning from two premises, one our own and one supplied by another. In its crudest form the argument may be stated thus: I believe that all is of God. My inquisitors insist that sin is part of the "all." Therefore, I believe that God sins. It seems very logical *to them*. I may object and say that I do not concur in their conclusions. I may even say that my premise is not mine, but God's. But no. My scheme is simply an attempt to exonerate Satan and prepare people for the homage which he will demand at the time of the end! Away with such a fellow from the earth!

This places me in a strange position. I cannot but consider their deduction a mistake in logic, a transgression of morals, and even an offense. In short, it is a full-orbed sin. I am eager to acknowledge, however, that it is of God. But even my small mind, weakened by overwork, and dulled by distress, has not the slightest difficulty in discriminating between the human and the divine aspect of these acts. God is making no mistakes. His servants are. He will justify their injustice, not because they are in line with His will, but because they are carrying out His intentions I have no hesitation in thanking God for this distressing antagonism, for I know that in His hands it is no error. Truth such as this needs opposition for its development and dissemination. It takes friction to rub off the rust of centuries.

I take it to be my duty never to insist on a deduction from another's words to which he does not assent. It may be impossible for me to see how he can escape it, but my infirmity is no valid ground for another's condemnation. I find the same mistake is often made in the study of the Scriptures. A deduction is made from some passage and held in opposition to the plain teaching of another portion. What am I, that I should escape this mishandling? I would take it very kindly of my inquisitors, however, if they would publicly acknowledge that I do not believe that God sins, or is the *author* of sin, and that I see nothing in my writings to that effect, but I have always maintained, with my inquisitor, that this is unscriptural.

I would exhort my inquisitors concerning the form of their indictment. I have striven to avoid non-scriptural forms of expression when dealing with this theme. This is difficult to do when writing at length on a single subject. But it is easy to do when drawing up definite charges. The form of an indictment may condemn those who prefer it. It may be purposely ambiguous, so as to cloud the issue. Such is the phrase "Author of sin." The word author is unscriptural. It is an appeal to prejudice. It seems to smirch God with sin. It may or may not imply that God sins. Some do not think that it does. Others do. The lack of love that thinks evil injects it into the issue as a character witness, to fasten the odium of heresy and blasphemy on those who stand for the truth!

The difficulty seems to be that we cannot easily view an act apart from its moral character. We do not readily see that no act is sinful in itself, but in its relations. The act of plucking and eating fruit is not necessarily a sin. Yet it was humanity's primal error. The mistake lay in its relation to the God



Who had forbidden it. If He had commanded it, it would have been commendable. Now that we know that it was essential to His intention, that He had provided for it before it occurred, that He arranged everything so that it should occur, we see that, though it was a sin in relation to His will, it was no mistake in view of His benevolent intention.

Who fortified Pharaoh's heart? Was it good or evil? Was it a sin or not? Straightforward answers to these simple questions should settle the matter. Until my judges suggest a more satisfactory solution I shall still believe and teach that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that it was necessary to spread abroad His name and fame and therefore good and just, and also that Pharaoh withstood God's word, which was an evil and a sin. One act. Two aspects. Bad and good.

Perhaps the greatest example of the distinction between God's will and His intention is found in the law promulgated from Sinai. Jehovah made known His will in a complete code of laws, besides the condensed commandments which were carved in stone. The Jew, who was resting on law, is said to "know the will" (Rom.2:18). But if it was God's intention that the nation should keep the law, it certainly was a dismal failure on His part. The law broke its greatest precept before it reached them. They dishonored God by its flagrant infringement.

But, though the failure of the law seems to be contrary to the will of God, it actually was a fulfillment of His intention. It was really given that "every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may be becoming subject to the just verdict of God, because by works of law, no flesh shall be justified before Him, for through law is the recognition of sin" (Rom.3:19,20). The law which, ostensibly, was to deter from sinning, actually was given for the detection of sin. It was given to prove that no one could keep it. Beneath the revelation of God's will in it was His intention that it should not be kept, but should accomplish its object through its infraction.

"Law crept in that the offense should be increasing" (Rom. 5:20). How differently did Israel, at Sinai, feel about it! They were quite sure that they would greatly lessen the distance between themselves and Jehovah by their obedience to His precepts. Why had He told them what He wanted them to do and to avoid unless it was His will to carry out His instructions? The will of Jehovah was clear. But His intention was quite concealed. He could not make known His intention at that time without frustrating it.

This should help us in considering the larger question of sin. Sin is always against the revealed will of God. No one can possibly find any excuse for sinning so far as His expressed precepts are concerned. Both conscience and nature add their voice to restrain us from wrong. But we do sin. How can we be justified unless the sin is, in some sense, justifiable? We know that it is God's intention to draw His creatures into loving intimacy with Himself through sin and a Saviour. We know that the temporary term of sin will leave the world infinitely richer in the knowledge and appreciation of God. It will bring God immeasurable treasures of love and adoration. As a whole, its results vindicate its presence for a time. What is true of all sin must be true of every sin.

This truth is the foundation of the doctrine of justification. Because it has been lost, justification has also disappeared, or has been degraded to a pardon or an "imputed" fiction. Few believe that God actually justifies believers. They imagine He only alters the court records, so that no one can legally prove their guilt. It is of the utmost comfort and satisfaction to know that all that we have done is vindicated by the part it plays in carrying out His intention. Do not let anyone sell you an imitation justification! God's is the actual, the genuine, the precious reality.

This is why we insist that all the world has *not* become "guilty" before God, as the Authorized Version mistranslates (Rom.3:19). The entire world is *subject to the just verdict of God* (C.V.). He

withholds this verdict until the judgment, in the case of the unbeliever. The believer, however, is pronounced *not* guilty. He is acquitted, vindicated, justified, by faith. His sins, though contrary to God's will, were in line with His intention, in order that He might reveal Himself through them.

All that the usual theology has to offer us at the consummation, even in the saved, is a partial, patched, repaired and repainted universe. The song of the saints will be in a minor key, "I was a *guilty* sinner." Their joy will be clouded by eternal regret and shame for their part in the tragedy of the eons. The eonian times will be the eyesore of eternity. Oh! if they only had not been! And so will God's wisdom and power be questioned, and His glory dimmed for He Himself must be the chief culprit in the collapse of His creation.

But away with such unworthy thoughts! The consummation will not reveal a patched, but a perfected universe. We will not be worrying about our past sins, but overwhelmed with God's wisdom and love in their vindication. Much as they distress us now, much as we fear them and avoid them and dread the very possibility of further sin, God will see to it that they will leave no stain, no blot to mar the bliss eternal, but will blend into His benign designs, and discover to a delighted universe the delicious depths of love which could not be displayed by any others device, or appreciated by any other plan.

This teaching is also the substructure for a mature experience in the things of God. It gives stability, a calm confidence in the face of the chaotic conditions which surround and engulf us. We are not worried, as once we were, by the awful opposition to God's will, nor do we fear for the fulfillment of His purpose. The flood tide of evil and sin, however contrary it may be to His will, is essential and indispensable to His ultimate intention. He is the great Alchemist Who will transmute everything into glorious gold by contact with the accursed tree.

It may not be easy to grasp the distinction between God's will and intention without, at the same time, revising our views on many related truths. We must have our eyes opened to the difference between evil and sin. Evil need not be wrong, while sin always is a mistake. We must determine the source of sin. We must see how God uses evil as a background to make good appear good. We must realize that sin is transmitted, not by a "sinful nature," but by inherited mortality. Then we will be able to understand how God justifies and repudiates sin. Above all, then will we revel in the discovery of a real God (a conception almost unknown today), not a magnified man, defeated and desperate amidst the ruins of His creation, but a Deity infinite in power, sublime in wisdom, limitless in His affections, Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11), in order to reveal Himself to our hearts as Light and Life and Love.

## **The Deity of God**

"IF GOD purposed that sin should enter the world, why does He cast Satan into the lake of fire for doing what it was planned he should do?" On the surface this question seems reasonable and right, but beneath its demand for fairness lies the most malignant of all sins. God is put in the same category with man. He is placed on trial by a jury of His peers. He is called to account as though He were a criminal and we were gods, high and mighty, and far more just than He. It denies His deity; it undermines His sovereignty. Man takes His empty throne and is seated in the place supreme.

When the great apostle of the nations was confronted with the equivalent of this question he did not even deign to answer it (Rom.9:19). None who ask it can be enlightened unless first of all they take the place which becomes them in His august Presence. So we echo the apostle's reply. Of those who seek to overthrow the truth by questioning God's right to do what He does, we simply ask, *Who are you?* We have no controversy with them. Their quarrel is with God. Until they bow to the Creator and acknowledge that they are merely creatures, His ways will be hidden and His doings devious and dark.

This question is but an echo of man's objections to God's dealings with Pharaoh. "You will be protesting to me, then, 'Why, then, is He still blaming? For has anyone withstood His intention?'" What is the spirit's answer to such insolence? "*O man*, who are *you*, to be sure, who are rejoicing to God? That which is moulded does not protest to the moulder, 'Why do you make me thus?' Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, and one for dishonor" (Rom.9:19)?

Jehovah said "*I will harden Pharaoh's heart*" (Ex.7:3). The Hebrew word here rendered "harden" is the same as is elsewhere translated, *encourage, establish, strengthen, fortify*, etc. Why should it have a special meaning when applied to Pharaoh? Pharaoh's heart was weak. It had to be fortified after the very first infliction (Ex.7:22). After the second, he called for Moses and Aaron and told them he would let the people go (Ex.8:8). After the third it was again fortified (Ex.8:19). After the fourth he weakened once more, and promised to let the people go into the wilderness (Ex.8:2).

While God had to encourage the king's heart, Pharaoh took the honor and glory to himself. This is entirely obscured in our version, where two distinct terms are both rendered "harden." The second term is the same as that in the precept "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex.20:12). It never has the sense of *harden*. Pharaoh *honored or glorified* his own heart (Ex.8:15,32 [28]; 9:34). God's answer to this is in the same terms, "And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when *I have gotten Me honor upon Pharaoh...*" (Ex.14:18).

Nothing is more mistaken than the supposition that the Pharaoh of the oppression was a mighty strongheart, whom nothing could move, and that his persistent opposition brought his destruction. His heart was infirm and faltering from the first to the finish. He sought one compromise after another, but whenever he weakened, Jehovah fortified his heart, so that he refused to carry out his concessions. It is useless for us to seek to evade the facts. Moses said, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me!'" (Ex.10:3). Pharaoh said "Go" (Ex.10:8). "But Jehovah fortified Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the sons of Israel go" (Ex.10:20).

The ruler of Egypt was the merest puppet in the hands of God. Pharaoh did not think so. *He* was conscious of no external coercion. He gloried in the influx of a mysterious might that enabled him to recover from his spells of fear and answer these miserable Hebrew slaves as they deserved. Herein lies the real essence of what is misnamed free will. It is simply that men are not conscious of coercion. Their volition is not really the independent deity it seems to be. It is as much the product of law as all else in nature. It is a composite of the interior and exterior forces in which they, have their being. Free will is the insensibility brought on by the anesthetic ignorance.

The important point for us to fix firmly is the fact that *God was apparently working counter to His revealed will*. It is but natural for us to suppose that, if He said that He wanted His people to go, He would use His influence with Pharaoh to effect their deliverance. But we forget the divine *purpose* back of it all. Israel's liberation and exodus and Pharaoh's defeat were not the end in view. They were merely the means. The immediate purpose was the revelation of God's power. The ultimate purpose is the complete revelation of Himself.

All knowledge is relative. The greatness of God's power can only be grasped by contrast with another similar power. Egypt's greatness and strength must be established before God's might can be manifested by its overthrow. And, if the ruler of Egypt begins to melt before His might, he must be held together long enough to stand up before the onslaughts of Jehovah. Man's puny power must actually be reinforced by God before it can even form a foil for the display of His strength.

The physical is a parable of the spiritual. Almost all locomotion or progress is the result of two counteracting forces. The major, or applied power, is modified by a minor or secondary directing force. Were the ships that cross the sea compelled to sail before the wind they would seldom reach a haven. The helmsman holds the vessel across the path of the breeze by pitting the water against the wind. Any sailor will acknowledge that the force that holds a ship to its course is quite as necessary to its usefulness as the driving power.

Gravity is the essential counter force on land. Without it we could not walk or ride. However much it may weigh on us and tire us, we could make no progress whatever without it. In walking, we lift our feet from the ground. They would continue to leave the earth but for gravity. We could not put them down again, for we have no support for a downward thrust, unless we are walking in a tunnel. But for gravity a vehicle could ascend a hill as easily as go down. Indeed, it could do neither, for it would soon leave the ground and lose all its power of traction.

The principle of two opposing forces is contained in almost all methods of utilizing mechanical energy. Every motorist knows that to get the full effect of his fuel, the momentum of an internal combustion engine must compress the charge after it has been exploded in order to produce practical results. These forces must not be equally balanced, of course, or the engine will stall. In operation, when the charge explodes, it is not immediately allowed to propel the piston, but the inertia of the engine compresses it for a brief instant, greatly increasing its potential power. After this it is allowed to do its proper work. If anyone wishes a practical example of the principle we are discussing, let him try to crank a motor with the spark advanced to running position. The explosion will force the engine *backwards*, and so forcefully that it will endanger the hand or arm of anyone who does not take due precautions.

The electric dynamo is gradually replacing other methods of producing power, so that, in civilized lands, it bids fair to become the main medium of motion and light and even heat. Suppose we should build a dynamo, driven by water power. We will take cores of soft iron and wind wire around them to make an armature. We will mount these so that the water will set them whirling. But we get no

electricity. No practical effect is produced.

Now, however, let us add some magnets and place the poles *so that they pull the armature in the opposite direction*. Now we have two opposing forces. The result is that we get an electric current. We may not be able to reason out the physical fact that an opposing power is essential, but we know that *it works*. The moment we withdraw the counter force it ceases to be practical. This subtle form of energy, which can be known only from its effects, is one of the closest approximations to the divine spirit which we have. The only way this physical power can be known is by the same principle which God used in the case of Pharaoh.

As we behold the grand orbs of space we are appalled at the power displayed. The moon, the sun, the myriads of stars, all present such staggering exhibitions of physical force that our imagination reels, and refuses to follow the facts. Yet these immense masses, as well as the most minute particles of matter in the universe are held in place by the operation of two forces, not by one the moon, for instance, like every other object above the earth, is constantly falling. What a tremendous impact it would make if it were not held aloft by the counteracting centrifugal motion which seeks to make it fly off into space!

These are offered simply as illustrations to enable us to grasp the truth taught in God's word, that He pits His power against itself, and introduces conflict into the creation, so as to guide it into the path which leads to perfection. Had Pharaoh obeyed the revealed will of God, Jehovah's purpose would have been defeated. There would have been no mighty portents, no restraining of the Red Sea, no bloodless battle, no defeat of Egypt's armies by a rabble of slaves. God's indignation and power would have remained below the horizon of human perception.

Perhaps no other event has so impressed mankind with the sovereign power of Jehovah as the deliverance of His people out of Egypt. Israel never did and never will forget it. Only a few millenniums have passed since Jehovah led His people from the land of bondage, yet millions of men have marveled at the might and majesty which it manifested. The suffering involved has been justified thousands of times by the lesson which it has conveyed.

With the indisputable and undeniable facts before us, we pray God's forgiveness beforehand for so much as staging the farce of bringing the divine Majesty before the bar of human folly. We repeat the question with which we began, suiting it to the circumstances attending the exodus out of Egypt. "If God purposed that Pharaoh should resist His mandate, why did He plague Egypt and drown Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea for doing what He had planned that they should do?" God Himself replies that it was done to display His indignation and to make His power known (Rom.9:22). And who dares to question His right to do as He wills with His own?

But for those who bow before His divine Majesty, there is a complete and satisfactory solution of the apparent moral obloquy which seems to cling to such arbitrary despotism. Our mistake lies in this, that we take a small segment of God's dealings with Pharaoh as a public character and treat it as though it were the complete cycle of His dealings with him as an individual.

Orthodoxy insists that the die is cast at death. According to its teachings Pharaoh was not only coerced into rebellion against God at the exodus, but he has consciously suffered for his sin ever since, and will do so for all eternity. The annihilationist view is far more merciful to Pharaoh, for he does not receive any punishment in death and suffers extinction of being after enduring the penalty of his acts. The revolt against God's deity has its roots in these unreasonable and irreconcilable doctrines of human destiny.

Once we allow God to complete the broken record of Pharaoh's life it is easy to justify Him and it is

easy for God to justify Pharaoh. The great king is not suffering now, before he appears in the judgment to be sentenced. When he does stand before the great white throne, his sentence will be just, in accord with his deeds. The judgment will be, not merely penal, but corrective and remedial. Its end will be death, in which there is no suffering or consciousness of time.

So far as Pharaoh's conscious experience is concerned, his death is immediately followed by his resurrection, and ushers him into the judgment. If he was drowned in the waters of the Red sea he loses all trace of time till he awakens before the great white throne. The judgment is not simply to condemn. Its object is to set right what is wrong. The greatest wrong is his attitude toward God. In the presence of Christ and the awful throne this will be corrected. By means of the blood of Christ his life will be justified (Rom.5:18).

To some it may seem inexplicable that, when he is brought to this point, he should not immediately join the saints, and enter into eonian bliss. But a little reflection will show that this has never been God's way. *We* are justified and reconciled, yet God does not immediately transport us into the ineffable bliss of His presence. How do most of His saints enter the glory? Through the portals of death. Some of the most faithful have actually suffered death by fire, and not by fire only, but by tortures unspeakably worse and more prolonged.

We do not believe in the theological denial of death embodied in the formula "Sudden death, sudden glory." There is no glory for us until the resurrection. The silence of the Scriptures and the palpable obscurity of theologians should be sufficient to convince anyone on this point. Nevertheless, since the dead know not anything (Ecc.9:5), this statement is true so far as they are aware. In their conscious experience, the moment of repose coincides with the moment of awakening.

Pharaoh dies the second death, yet to him it is quite as if he entered at once into the unutterable glory of the consummation. Through water he enters into the resurrection. Through fire he enters vivification. Thus he is justified, vivified and reconciled. He is a notable example of those whom God locks up in stubbornness (Rom.11:32). In his case, as in all others, it is done, not to lead to his eternal condemnation, but that God may be merciful to him. Christ, Who taught His disciples to love their enemies, will display the richness of His heart and the efficacy of His blood, in the reconciliation of the invisible sovereignties which He created (Col.1:16,20).

At that time no such question will cloud the character of God, so we can well imagine Pharaoh changing it into an affirmation, or, rather, exultation. Well may he exclaim: Blessed be the God Who used my unworthy self to exalt His name and spread His fame! It is an honor to have been trodden beneath His feet!

The case of Satan has some points peculiar to the arch enemy, but it is the same in principle as that of Pharaoh and all of God's opponents. The differences are in degree and detail, not in essence. If God Himself encouraged Pharaoh to oppose His revealed will, we are under no necessity of seeking to invent some new god to be His adversary. Pharaoh carried out God's larger purpose while opposing His apparent determination. So Satan is His instrument for producing the necessary alienation which is the only possible basis of the universal reconciliation.

Satan has no more free will than Pharaoh had. Freedom, in the creature, does not consist in absolute independence of environment, but in accordance with it. God alone originates action. Place, time, and circumstance control His creatures. In reality, they have as little to say about the course of their existence as they had about their creation. But consciously, within the limitations of their own experience, they are allowed the same liberty as Pharaoh had. They may sit upon the throne of their own diminutive personality and fondly dream that they have excluded God from their domain. Of

such the chief is Satan, adversary of Christ and slanderer of God.

If judgment were what men think it is, mere punishment for misbehavior, it would be somewhat difficult to see clearly just why Satan should suffer in the lake of fire for having played his part according to the underlying purpose of God. But God's judgment is never such an exhibition of puerile impotence. It sets matters *right*. During the eons, it will deal with all in accord with His *revealed* will, and in such a fashion that this will coincide with His underlying purpose at the consummation.

Neither is God's judgment concerned with detached cases, with no reference to its effect on others, especially Himself. He did not make His power known in His dealings with Pharaoh in such a way as to forfeit the regard of all who love justice and righteousness, though such seems to be the case at present. The judgment of Pharaoh will not only set him right but will set God right in the eyes of all His creatures. He is God, hence He must be an absolute ruler. But He will yet show that His is a most benevolent and beneficent rule.

So with Satan. His judgment is unique. Why is he not cast into the lake of fire together with the beast and the false prophet at the beginning of the thousand years? Because God still has work for him to do. If it was contrary to the underlying purpose of God that mankind should rebel at the close of the millennium, why is he kept and loosed in order to bring it about? Some will insist that this rebellion was of the devil. So it was. But if the mayor of one of our municipalities were to set a noted political prisoner loose in order to lead a revolution against the government there are some hard-headed individuals who would hold him responsible just as much, if not more, than the traitor.

Satan's judgment is not a private, but a public affair, quite as much as his previous career. He is not bound for his own sake but to restrain his power for evil. He does not make his escape, but is deliberately loosed in order to stir up strife. It is evident that Gog and Magog would not have rebelled apart from his instigation. They are not "responsible." Neither could Satan have done it if he had not been set free. He is not "responsible." God alone is "responsible," for He is the only One Who is neither bound nor influenced by an exterior force

Here is an episode in the annals of evil which we would commend to the consideration of those who insist on the deity of Satan but repudiate the deity of God. They may refuse Jehovah's solemn declaration that He is the creator of evil and place the sable crown on the brow of Satan and thus rob God of His proper place because their vision of the past has been dimmed by the fogs of tradition, but they cannot confute the fact that in this final irruption of sin, which rehearses briefly its introduction at the first, their god goes forth as the obedient vassal of his Jailer. The unbinding of Satan is just as much the deliberate act of God as his binding at the beginning of the thousand years.

It is worthy of note that Satan is one of the few who receive no hearing before the great white throne. As soon as his part has been played he is cast into the place specially prepared for him and his messengers. There is no need to inquire into his case. All judicial proceedings are superfluous. So he is summarily consigned to the lake of fire.

With ordinary human beings the lake of fire means immediate death. But not so with Satan. A man would soon succumb to imprisonment in the abyss. He stood it for a thousand years. There is no reason to suppose that it was a place of suffering. We have no ground for believing that Satan suffers before his doom. The salutary though severe providence which subdues and softens the hearts of mankind has never been his portion. Some of God's dearest saints have spent a lifetime in pain. They will thank Him for it when they realize its benefits. It does not destroy their sense of God's love. It will form the foil for its display.

For Satan to enter the consummation with all the unbroken pride and arrogance that are his at the end of the thousand years would be unthinkable. Then all creation will have been subdued. So that Satan must be the subject of the severest discipline to bring him into subjection to God and in harmony with all creation at the consummation. This is found in the lake of fire. This is not the place where men are judged. Their judgment precedes it. Satan suffers in it. There is just as equitable a proportion between his life and its rectification as there is in the case of mankind. If men are judged in accord with their deeds it is only reasonable to assume that Satan's doom should be more severe, to accord with his doings.

In brief, the case of Satan presents no special difficulties. The case of Pharaoh or of any man presents precisely the same problem. Indeed, our own experience ought to enable us to understand these greater examples. We may refuse to believe that Satan was made a sinner apart from his own choosing, but we can hardly convince even ourselves that we had any choice in our own entrance into the world as we are. Why not ask, "If men come into a world of sin without their own volition, what right has God to condemn them?" The principle is the same. The answer is the same. God is *God*, and we are His creatures.

We can see the answer to this problem in the creation about us (Rom.8:18-24). God has subjected it to vanity. It had no will in the matter. But this is in *expectation*. We can see the solution in our own experience. We are suffering at the present time, not because God uses us to oppose His will, but because we are making it known. Is it not stranger to suffer for doing the will of God, than for consciously undoing His decrees? Is it not more difficult to see why we should suffer than to understand Satan's judgment? But, you say, we have a hope. We know that our suffering does not deserve the glory about to be revealed. So with all suffering. It is transient, disciplinary, corrective, and leads to the haven of God's heart. Christ died for all, and all will eventually benefit by the efficacy of His blood.

If Satan, created to oppose God, were doomed to eternal torment, then we may indeed question the justice of God. If the Slanderer, formed to destroy, is finally annihilated, then indeed we may wonder if God has done right. So long as we are held by either of these alternatives, we are almost forced to shield the character of God by falling back on the assumption that He is not responsible for the creation of His adversary, and thus we unconsciously drag Him from His throne. The doctrine of the deity of the Devil is the rational recoil from God's supposed inability to bring His creation to a successful consummation.

But once we see that sin and suffering are parts of the divine process, not the goal, and that all will contribute to the full revelation of Himself and the utmost blessing of His creatures, we have a destiny which does not demand His dethronement at the beginning. We do not need to fabricate another god to take the blame from His shoulders. In brief, *we have a God*. Satan's suffering in the lake of fire is essential to God's purpose for both Himself and all creation. It is not his end. It is the process by which he is prepared for his ultimate place in the perfected universe.

The rational retribution of believing in the triumph of Satan at the close is to deify him at the beginning. Reason demands that one who can thwart God and rob Him of the mass of His creatures must be His equal or superior. As a result we come to the most startling conclusion that very few, even of His saints, intelligently hold to the proper deity of God! Of course all will repudiate the charge. They would not think of denying what seems so "fundamental." Yet their words and their actions all proclaim that He is not God alone, but only one of the Christian pantheon.

It is quite fitting that those who hold to eternal torment or annihilation should object to God's deity.



They reason in a circle. Because all are not saved He is not God. He is not God because all are not saved. But they should not load us with *their* problems. We who see the grand ultimate are enabled to acknowledge His Godhood. Eternal torment either deifies the devil or transforms God Himself into a fiend. Annihilation somewhat softens the harshness of His injustice, yet insists on Satan's supremacy. No one can be held by either of these doctrines or any intermediate scheme of human destiny and acknowledge the full deity of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His own loving adamant will.

It is only as we see His supreme success at the consummation, when He will be All in all His creatures, that we are able to grasp the great truth of the deity of God. Only then can we turn back to the beginning and see Him supreme. Only then can we look above the clouds and see Him ride the storm. Only then can we believe Him when He says (Isa.45:6-9):

*I am Yahweh, and there is none else,  
Former of light, and Creator of darkness,  
Maker of peace, and Creator of evil:  
I the Yahweh, am Maker of all these.  
Drip jubilation, ye heavens, from above,  
And ye skies, distil righteousness.  
Open, O earth, and be fruitful with salvation  
And let righteousness sprout together with it.  
I, Yahweh, am its Creator.  
Will one contend with his Former?  
The earthenware with the Ceramist?*

## *The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD*

### *Part 2 - Chapter 1*

# **"Responsibility"**

THERE is an aspect of the theological doctrine of human responsibility, like that of free will, which is a direct contradiction of the deity of God. It denies the great gulf between the Creator and the creature, the Potter and the clay, the mighty Molder and His handiwork. It assumes an independence of God which elevates man while, at the same time, it degrades his Maker. So great is the reverence for this non-scriptural teaching, that it has become the touchstone by which to test truth. If any statement merely seems to ignore or set aside creature responsibility, it is rejected, even if it is clearly stated in the Scriptures. It has become one of the foundation stones of human religion, by means of which God's Word is made of none effect. It should never be confused with accountability.

The Scriptures do not directly advert to this theme. The expression does not occur at all in the popular versions. Neither is there any term for it in either the Hebrew or the Greek Scriptures. Hence we may be sure that we are outside the scope of divine revelation when we use it or propound it as a problem. It shows that our thoughts are not God's thoughts. We should rid ourselves of this philosophy rather than seek to force such a notion into God's revelation. Certainly there are elements in the word "responsibility" which are scriptural, but there are others which are not, and we can not distinguish these unless we forsake it for sound, scriptural expressions. It is only because theology has perverted the truth as to God's judgment and refuses His deity, that it needs to fall back upon responsibility in man's relations to God.

It is not my wish to write this article, seeing that it is not on a scriptural subject, but my friends are much concerned about this matter, and some of them have pressed for an explanation. Besides, many who read our expositions stumble at the fact that we pay little heed to human "responsibility," which, we are assured, must underlie all of God's dealings. The idea seems to be that the sinner is a culprit and God like a human judge, who may punish only those who have attained sufficient maturity to realize their crimes and who had it in their power to do otherwise if they wished--in short, who are independent of God, and can do right or wrong as it suits themselves.

It must be clearly understood at the outset that we are concerned here only with the relations between God and His creatures, not that between man and man. What I may say must not be applied to the social or political relations existing among mankind. I do not wish to deny the "responsibility" of parents, or of rulers, or of any who have a duty to fulfill toward a fellow man, and everyone, believer or unbeliever, to whom aught has been committed, must give account to God. The confusion of thought on this subject is due largely to lack of discrimination between our relations to God and that to creatures like ourselves. By reasoning or inference the human is carried over to the divine, because men have no proper idea of the dignity due to the Deity.

The reason I prefer not to write on this subject is that it has no scriptural basis. The word has no equivalent in the divine vocabulary. If we wish God's thoughts we must use His words, especially when it takes such a large place in our thinking. Moreover, a denial of human responsibility is almost sure to give an utterly false impression. Men will reason that, if the creature is not responsible, men may sin as much as they please, and judgment is impossible. Job's friends wished to prove that he was "responsible" for his plight. This is specifically denied at the outset, where we are assured that God, through Satan, was "responsible." But few have as yet learned this lesson.

The whole difficulty depends on a partial denial of God's deity. He is a Judge, though He has delegated all judgment to the Son. But He is far more than that. A wise human judge may seek to sentence a culprit so as to correct his character, but he cannot justify his past life. That is beyond his function and his power. Indeed, if he did so, he could not pass an adverse sentence. He can condemn a man to death but he cannot bring him back to life. These things only God can do, and these He will do for all men in the future. God brings all men into condemnation. This is not within the province of a judge. This also would make justice impossible in a human court.

The fact is that God is the Deity, and we are His creatures, and He is bent on blessing us by revealing Himself to us. This can be done only through an experience of evil and sin and judgment. In the last analysis, as between the Creator and the created, He alone is "responsible," for He makes us according to His own purpose and plan, and we have no choice or lot in the matter whatever. This is basic, but it should not be made the basis of conclusions contrary to His revelation. It would be easy to reason that, in this case, since no one is "responsible," God cannot righteously condemn any for what they could not avoid. In fact, on this subject all reasoning is apt to be vain except that which has for its major premise the absolute deity of a God Whose acts are beyond the criticism of His creatures, Who can and does condemn the irresponsible.

In utter contrast to the popular dogma, the truth of human irresponsibility is clearly set forth in the ninth of Romans. After citing the case of Pharaoh, the conclusion is drawn: "Consequently, then, to whom He is willing He is merciful, yet whom He is willing, He is hardening." Seeing that this totally sets aside human responsibility, the apostle takes up this objection: "You will be protesting to me, then, 'Why, then, is He still blaming? for has anyone withstood His intention?'" If it is God's intention that a man oppose Him, and He hardens him to do it, can the man be blamed? He certainly is not "responsible." What shall we say? The apostle does not even try to find a reply, for the question entirely ignores the great fact that it is *God* Who does these things. No man has a right to ask it. "*O man! who are YOU, to be sure, who are answering again to God?*" While such a course may be wrong for a man to follow, it is utterly right for God, because He not only glorifies Himself through it, but also brings blessing eventually to the one who seems to be wronged, as well as to all His creatures, by its means.

The rest of this passage enforces this great fact--of man's utter irresponsibility--by figures of speech which cannot be mistaken. God is the Molder: we are the molded. He is the Potter: we are the clay. Is there anything more irresponsible than a lump of clay in the hands of a potter? I much enjoyed watching a potter in Jerusalem put a piece of clay upon his wheel and deftly shape a small bowl with his fingers, and then--to my surprise--he destroyed it all in an instant. The clay was utterly at his mercy. It had no will and no voice. It certainly did not say, "Why do you make me thus?" Oh, that the saints might learn this humbling lesson! All creatures will come to the realization of their utter impotence and God's power when He has finished dealing with them, for He must not only be All in *all*, but *All* in all.

If it were not usual to evade this passage, which is practically the only one which really discusses the subject, who would dare to champion this philosophy? Can there be a more decisive denial than the question, "has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, *and one for dishonor?*" The vessel for dishonor cannot escape its function or its fate. It will be used for that which must bring down the indignation and judgment of God. Sin must be judged, not only for the sake of the sinner, that he may realize what it is, but for the sake of all creatures, and as a display of the just character of God. Our injustice must recommend God's justice. Is God unjust in bringing on indignation in that case? By no means. Else how shall God be judging

the world? (Rom.3:5,6). These verses in the third of Romans also are clear proof that God judges the irresponsible, and that this would be unjust, if He were a man.

Of course, many cannot believe these words or any like them. If "God locks all up together in stubbornness" (Rom.11:32) and "all is out of Him" (Rom.11:36), then the basis of all morality seems to be taken from them, along with their fancied responsibility. The reason is that they are still self-centered, and imagine that they should be given a chance to display themselves, rather than be helpless vessels for the revelation of God. As we will see, the real reason why so many refuse the truth is because they take it for heartless Calvinism, which confuses God's process with His goal, and dooms the irresponsible creature to endless, hopeless torture, and thus displays Him as a hideous and hateful monster instead of a wise and loving Saviour.

No man is "responsible" for being a sinner. He was not consulted before he entered the family of Adam, and he has no means of extricating himself out of the penalty of Adam's sin. His first father sinned without his knowledge or consent, and he is obliged to suffer the consequences, which include the extreme penalty, death. Even his own sins are due to his inherited mortality. So, in reality, he cannot help himself. Here we have an example which should instruct us. *Man suffers and dies even though he is not "responsible."* And he will be raised and judged for the sins which he committed, even though we might easily prove his irresponsibility. *God's judgment is not based on responsibility.*

Responsibility is often confused with light. This is a mistake. The character and penalty of sin varies according to its relationship to God's will, not to man's capacities. A sin against light, such as that contained in the law, brings sin into closer contact with God. A transgression is no longer a mere failure or falling short. It becomes an act definitely directed against God, and as such demands a more severe corrective. And an offense, which wounds God's feelings, is liable to a still greater penalty. Judgment is not according to man's ability (miscalled "responsibility") but to God's revelation. To whom much is *given*, from him much will be required.

### **JUDGMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

It is usually accepted as an axiom in human law that punishment should vary according to responsibility. Thus, minors seldom come within the scope of criminal law. The Japanese have a classic story of a maid who deliberately set fire to her parents' home in the hope that it would lead to a reunion with her lover. As a result a large part of the city was destroyed and many lives were lost. Still, the question of her fate did not depend on her act or its results, but on her age. Had she been less than eighteen, she could not have been held "responsible." But, as she had just come of age, she suffered the death penalty. Such is human law! What a travesty of justice! According to this all who die as minors would not be subject to the usual penalty, but to corrective discipline. In fact, *God treats all as we treat minors*, for His judgments will right all that is wrong. Even if minors are not responsible for their acts, they must be judged in some way when they have committed a crime.

It is generally supposed that only the responsible will suffer for their sins. But that is not so in God's providence and will not be so in His judgment. A trainman ignores a signal and hundreds of innocent victims suffer. A great storm sweeps over the land and thousands, saint and sinner alike, are destroyed. A great earthquake kills multitudes in a moment. Is it just? Men call it an act of God for which they refuse to be responsible. God does not act according to human law in His present dealings with mankind. Neither will He do so in the judgment. In both, the idea of responsibility is entirely absent, for the simple reason that it has no place there. Its injection is only one of the temporary and illusive ideas of man in his ignorance and rejection of God.

However, if, as the final result of God's eonian operations, the greater part, or even a fraction of His creatures should be condemned to endless torment or final extinction, it would be impossible to justify God in His efforts at self-revelation. Even the Deity cannot display Himself at the expense of His creatures and at their loss, for He is Love, and such a revelation would be an exhibition of hate. It is only as we see that all the suffering which comes to the creature will be fully compensated by God, nay, will become a vital factor in his future bliss, that we are able to see why responsibility is practically absent from the Scriptures, yet so important a part of human religion. In Holy Writ, God operates the universe. Outside, man is master of his fate.

Eternal torment becomes insufferably hideous, if its subjects are not responsible--that is, if they had not brought it upon themselves when they might have done otherwise. As a matter of fact, if those who hold to everlasting punishment could not fix the responsibility for their fate upon these unfortunates, they would abhor their own teaching. That is why they cannot account for the doom of infants, or those under the years of accountability. Even those whose hearts have been seared by years of familiarity with the fires of hell (for others), shudder at the thought of finding infants and the insane undergoing its torments. And what of the vast majority, who have never heard of Christ? Are they responsible? If they have not believed they are not saved. And how could they believe what they have never heard?

If men had not this false refuge of human responsibility, many more would be forced to reconsider the fiendish doctrines of human destiny which they hold. As it is, if their hearts are not utterly hard, they will not believe in the damnation of infants, and are led into many non-scriptural notions as to the age of accountability, the appointment of sponsors at baptism, confirmation, and what not, seeing that *eternal* torture or annihilation can never be justified in the case of those who are not fully answerable. If they could only see that God holds *none* responsible, they would find everlasting suffering or death utterly repugnant and impossible. "Responsibility" is a twin heresy with eternal doom.

The real question concerns the judgment. What is it? When? Why? At the great white throne, when all the dead will rise to be judged, the question of responsibility will not come up at all. *All* of the dead will rise, in other words, all unbelievers, for only these have not been made alive at the previous resurrections. There will be no question of their former age, state, or religion. If they are dead, they will stand before the great white throne. Moreover, they will be judged according to their acts. The nature, extent, and severity of their judgment may be adjusted according to circumstances, but there is no question whether they are too young or too ignorant or otherwise ineligible to judgment. According to human standards most of them can hardly be held responsible for their acts. Their youth, their darkness, their environment, evil influences--all these they could not evade. Yet, for their own sakes, their acts must be judged.

The object of human justice is quite different from God's judgment. Men must protect society by removing objectionable members from it, either for a time, by imprisonment, or finally, by death. Divine judgment has an entirely different aim. It has to reveal God's righteousness, as a basis for His love, by placing a proper penalty on all injustice. This can be done without bringing the "responsible" criminal into court, for the saints will not even come into judgment. Christ has suffered for them, not because He was "responsible," but because, by so doing, He has displayed God's love as well as His justice, and this is the ultimate aim of all.

A real difficulty here is our perverted view of the meaning of judgment. We look at it as *punishment*, a penalty incurred by wrong doing. God's judgments are corrective. They set matters right. To most persons the idea of infants appearing in the judgment is almost unthinkable. But why not? Christ sits

on a great *white* throne. *It is not black*. He will do no wrong. Nothing will occur there to which there can be the least objection on the part of any creature in the universe. If, later, God intends to reconcile all who appear in the judgment, this must be done on a righteous basis. All wrongs must be righted before men can live in perfect peace with God and with one another--the object of this judgment.

### **DIVINE IRRESPONSIBILITY**

Thus we see that this idea is a moral necessity for all who hold false ideas of human destiny. God must not be blamed for everlasting torment, or endless death. That would transform Him into a fiend. Therefore, men have been forced to invent this doctrine of moral responsibility, which is, in reality, the assertion of divine irresponsibility. If God tortures His creatures eternally He must not be blamed. If He wipes them out of existence, it cannot be His fault. But if He deals with each one justly in judgment, so as to correct what is wrong, even if by severest affliction and distress, and eventually makes each one alive, bringing him back to His own heart--as the Scriptures declare--then He needs no excuse, He may be burdened with all the responsibility without in the least tarnishing His righteous and holy Name.

Men hold God less responsible for the work of His hands than a weak creature for his fellow men. Though He is able to turn men's hearts as the ripples of water, He cannot help Himself if the majority of their hearts are estranged from Him! Though no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him, He can do nothing for the myriads who do not find the way of salvation! Is He not at all responsible for the state of the world, for the circumstances which make most sinners the helpless victims of their surroundings? Is He not responsible that Satan is still free to lead mankind astray? Not even for the final rebellion, which is the direct result of Satan's liberation after the thousand years? Where will we end if it is necessary to relieve Him of all responsibility in order to clear His character? What will become of His deity if we are compelled to use such means to justify His acts? This seems necessary only because we are too narrow, too dark, too ignorant, or too timid to believe the goal He has placed before Him.

### **HOW IT AFFECTS CONDUCT**

Shall we persist in sin in order that grace may increase? (Rom.6:1). Just as it has been argued that the doctrine of grace will lead to sin, so it is insisted that freedom from moral responsibility will encourage us in ungodly living. And, even as a false apprehension of grace may have led to license, so a superficial glance at this release from responsibility may lead to laxity and carelessness and sin. But we should not reject grace because of its abuse. So neither should we judge this truth by its effect on those who know only its form and not its power. Grace does not lead to sin, neither does the acknowledgment of God's deity promote lawlessness.

The difficulty here is a real one. It may be wise not to press this matter on those who do not heartily acknowledge the deity of God. They are apt to reason that, if they are not responsible, they will suffer no penalty. They will say, "Why, then, is He still blaming?" (Rom.9:19), and seek to find an excuse for sin in blind fate. But man's irresponsibility does not affect God's judgment. All who stand before the great white throne will be judged *according to their acts*. Were judgment mere "punishment," or were it eternal, this would be intolerable. That is why most men, having a distorted idea of divine judgment, do not hesitate to call such teaching as this "fiendish" and "diabolical." It is their false outlook, their unbelief which makes it appear so. The doctrines of eternal torment and annihilation effectually prevent any full acceptance of God's deity. He must be relieved of the "responsibility" for such a fate on the part of any of His creatures, and they must shoulder this

responsibility.

Men are sufficiently ignorant of their creaturehood to imagine that they can answer for their own acts. This self-confidence is necessary in order that it may be shattered. God cannot be All in anyone who is all in himself. He could not be All in anyone if all were dependent on themselves for their destiny. So far as their present consciousness is concerned, men are not aware of the subtle forces which combine to form their will and their way. When these all flow in one direction, they are "free" and seem to act without any compulsion or restraint. They have their own way, and are willing to answer for it. If influences clash, and they must "choose," they yield to the strongest and imagine that they have yielded to none. In this eon they carry out the behests of the chief of the aerial jurisdiction, the spirit that is now operating in the sons of Stubbornness (Ephesians 2:2).

No doubt numerous passages in the Scriptures can be found in which human responsibility seems to be implied. The Mosaic law appears to place the responsibility of keeping it on the shoulders of Israel. But later revelation not only shows that it would not be kept, but that it was not given for that purpose, and, indeed, that it could not be kept by sons of Adam. It crept in, not to decrease sin, but to increase offense (Rom.5:20). If a law had been given to responsible men who could have kept it, they would have done so, and displayed their own righteousness (Gal.3:21). But as it is, they cannot do so, and incur the just penalty, and so, by their unrighteousness and its judgment, display God's righteousness, which is the real aim of God's law.

A wise father is justified in teaching his children their limitations by asking them to do the impossible. This is ever so much more effective and impressive than the mere assertion of their impotence. So we are by no means warranted in saying that God does not demand of His creatures what they cannot do. That is merely an unsupported inference. What man has lived up to God's standard? With One Exception, none! Laying aside all such false reasonings, we are shut up to the clear assertion that God alone possesses sufficient power to effect His purpose, hence He only is "responsible."

### **EASTERN FATALISM**

In Eastern lands the husk of this great truth is still found in the ingrained fatalism of the people. "Whatever shall be will come to pass." But, being held as a mere philosophy, apart from the knowledge of God and His ultimate purpose through Christ Jesus, it has degenerated into an apathetic acceptance of blind fate, even when associated with the name of God. This leads to hopelessness and laxity. In contrast to this, the knowledge that God only is responsible alone can rescue us from utter despair, once we learn how little dependence is to be placed upon man. A belief in God's ultimate is irrational apart from it, for if God counts upon any of His creatures apart from His spirit, His goal is by no means sure. Moreover, there is not the slightest ground for careless behavior, for the motives which lead us to please God are strengthened, rather than weakened by the realization that He has not left aught to chance, so that even our failures, much as we regret them personally, are within the scope of His mighty plan.

We are reminded that believers must stand before the dais of Christ, to receive for the things done in the body (2 Cor.5:10), and hence they must be "responsible." The spirit of God deduces differently. After exhorting us to carry our salvation into effect with fear and trembling, the reason is given: "*for it is God* Who is operating in you to will as well as to work..." (Phil.2:12, 13). The slave of God who is profoundly impressed with his own responsibility is due for a great disappointment in that day, but he who realizes his absolute dependence on God--that He desires him to do that which he is quite unable to accomplish in his own strength (for which he therefore is *not* "responsible")--he alone will

do that in which God delights. The theory of responsibility, like that of "the perseverance of the saints," leads away from God, the Source of all power, and makes self-centered, self-sufficient servants, who seldom see why they should fear and tremble.

## HUMAN THEOLOGY

Theological literature and practice is saturated with the thought of human responsibility. No one seems to be struck with the absence of the term in the sacred text. Indeed there are many who would consider that a very grave oversight on the part of the Author. So far as we have observed, the term is not only applied to temporal judgments, in order to press the point that privilege entails responsibility, but is the necessary preliminary to all judgment, especially that which is without end. Briefly stated, if men were not responsible, God could not punish them.

In this sense the non-scriptural term is but the reflex of unscriptural ideas concerning judgment. It is not just to "punish" men for acts to which they were impelled by influences over which they had no control. A good criminal lawyer could easily excuse any crime on this ground, for there are no incentives to crime, except innate tendencies and external influences which appear without our bidding. But, when we find that God's judgments are not mere "punishments" meted out to "responsible" criminals, but severe yet salutary corrective measures which counteract, or rather cooperate for eventual reconciliation, we are not driven to invent a term not found in the divine vocabulary in the sense in which we use it.

The idea of responsibility is not an innocent addition to God's revelation. It is a harmful accretion to the Scriptures, leading to much that is contrary to the truth and subversive of the knowledge of God.

If human beings are not sinners until they come to years of accountability, it is imperative to determine what age or condition is necessary. In this the Word of God gives no help whatever. Everyone has a different idea, and the indeterminate years stretch all the way from infancy to maturity. If, in some way which has never been clearly defined, irresponsible youth is "sure of heaven," it would be a mercy if none were allowed to develop into manhood and womanhood. Infanticide becomes the best assurance of salvation. Murder might accomplish eternal weal, while the rescue of an endangered youth from death would be nothing short of a heinous crime, if he should still be found unsaved at the age of accountability.

Human courts are continually at a loss to determine the amount of "responsibility." Of late the theory has been gaining ground that every murderer is insane, and not accountable for his acts. It is a plausible plea, and, enforced by sufficient influence and other valuable considerations, may save many a murderer's life. Is not the very doing of such a deed in itself evidence of insanity?

Further, is not the commission of any crime convincing proof of moral disease which we have inherited and for which we are not "responsible?" The only possible reply is based, not on a denial of the facts, but on an appeal to the terrible results of such teaching. Human courts find that they cannot, dare not, make many allowances on the score of irresponsibility. Ignorance of the law does not excuse anyone, although it is absolutely impossible for even a professional jurist to know all the laws. Thus we see how insoluble are the problems which this theory raises, even in its application in human courts.

Before closing, we again earnestly beg the reader not to discard judgment along with responsibility, and thus give free license to sin and lawlessness. The reasoning is false that bases judgment on responsibility. Just as minors, who have not attained to the years of discretion, are, nevertheless, sent to houses of correction for their betterment, so God judges His irresponsible creatures, through our Lord Jesus Christ, for His own glory and their good. We do not allow a child to go without



chastisement merely because it is irresponsible. Let us correct our ideas of God's judgment, and all reasoning as to responsibility will vanish. Judgment will be meted out impartially to all unbelievers, *according to their acts*. The fact that men are not responsible is not an incentive to sin, for it does not remove the judgment, and restores God to the throne of His omnipotence.

If men must reason, let them be logical in their deductions, and they will not clash with God's Word. If, for instance, all of God's creatures were endowed with the power to thwart His intention, or to act counter to it in any way, how can He fulfill His purpose? Recognizing this, men have whittled Him down to a second or third rate deity, who *does not*, and *cannot* carry out His own counsel. In making man "divine," they have made God human. All who believe that God will succeed in His declared intention to become All in all, cannot consistently hold to human responsibility. If this teaching is true, we must acknowledge eternal torment also, for that is the only goal to which human ability can lead, apart from God.

To sum up: creature responsibility is a contradiction in terms, and denies the responsibility of the Creator. It is a necessary corollary of the doctrines of everlasting torment or eternal death. Man must be made responsible for such a fiendish fate, or God would be to blame. But once our eyes and hearts are opened to the truth of God's great ultimate, to be All in all, we are not forced to excuse Him by means of a theory, not only unknown to God's revelation, but contrary to its plain assertions, but freely acknowledge our own impotence and irresponsibility, in the glorious light of His revelation, that, because He is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His own will, He will succeed in His grand purpose of becoming All in all.

## **What is Judgment?**

IT IS A SAD COMMENTARY on the human race to find that the word "judgment" is so unstable and liable to deterioration. This must be because men are so unjust and vindictive themselves. The word has come to mean condemnation and punishment almost exclusively, when it ought to be neutral. How seldom is it used in a good sense among us! It will be worth a good deal of effort to restore its true meaning, if only to keep us from distorting it in connection with the great white throne. Let us note first what company it keeps in the Greek Scriptures.

The Pharisees were not slow to *condemn* others. Yet our Lord rebuked them for passing over *judgment* and the *love* of God. They neglected the reparatory side of judgment. The *poor* (Prov. 29:14; Psa.72:4) they failed to judge, and the *fatherless* (Isa. 1:23; Psa.10:18), that is, they did not protect them in their rights. Our Lord combined *judgment* with *mercy* and *faith*. These, the weightier matters of the law, they neglected. Such a "judgment" certainly did not mean punishment. Instead of so judging, the scribes devoured widows' houses, though they were swift to condemn those who did not keep the traditions (Mark 12: 40).

Perhaps the best place to show that judgment is always *right*, is found in Abraham's appeal to the Lord, when He spoke of the state of Sodom. The Authorized Version reads, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right*?" (Gen.19:25). I agree that they expressed the sense correctly, yet I deplore the fact that, in doing so, they passed up a notable opportunity of anchoring the true meaning of the word *judgment* in our language. The Hebrew reads, "The Judge of the whole earth, is He not doing *judgment*?" It is clear that anything wrong would not be judgment in Abraham's eyes. If anyone in Sodom should suffer unjustly that would not be *judgment*, and would be wrong. *There is absolutely no injustice in divine judgment.* It is rather, *the righting of what is already wrong.*

### **POSTPONED JUDGMENTS**

A short-sighted glance at God's judgments will lead to perplexity and atheism. We instinctively think that God must set matters right, and we are quite correct in this assumption. But we fail to see that simple restitution, without any gain, is also a failure, for the sufferings entailed in the process are not properly paid for. There is no solution except a future consummation, and that cannot be accepted except by faith. Even a brief survey of God's judgments, if comprehensive, will serve to satisfy us with God's plan as a whole, and with His present operations, though they entail some suffering on our own part. These we will gladly endure, in view of the overwhelming compensation in the future.

After God, through the serpent, had brought about the sin and offense of Adam, He judged the first man by making him and the race mortal, so that they would sin without the direct intervention of Satan. Up to the deluge they were left without corrective measures, so that they had to be wiped out with a flood. From that time on, judgment was put into the hands of man, and there has been a weak attempt on his part to see that each one gets his rights. But, as individuals failed when they sought to do that which was right in their own eyes before the deluge, so, now, governments fail in dispensing justice, and will be judged in the coming day of His indignation.

But, in this, man's day, God has come in, in various ways, in order to vary His great demonstration of human incompetence. First, He gave a revelation to Job and to his associates, and to the rest of

humanity through them, of the function of evil. It is not confined to the punishment of sinners, but is essential to the revelation of God's grace, so is the portion of the saints as well. Moreover, it is not fruitless, but produces a double blessing. This revelation should have enabled all man kind to endure evil with fortitude, but only a few of the saints have understood it up to now. In the future it will be a magnificent testimony to all mankind of the very lesson which it is intended to teach.

But a much clearer revelation was given to Israel in the law. Instead of leaving them in the dark in their judgments of one another, He revealed to them statutes and judgments by which they could decide righteously. Moreover, He gave them intermediaries, priests, through whom they could find out His mind in any case. They were well equipped to *know* what is right, but not to *do* it. Thus there is a much deeper humiliation in lawlessness than in ignorance. The law was not given to be kept, but to transmute sin into offense and shortcoming into law breaking. It only intensified the fact that judgment, in the hands of man, is a monumental failure.

The failure of *nations* to judge righteously will be corrected by fearful outpourings of divine indignation at the time of the end. They are now ripe for judgment, for they are ruining the earth by their injustice and strife. Even as *individual* judgment had to be delayed before the flood because a corrective was not in keeping with the character of God's demonstration of human depravity until it had come to the full, so *national* judgment cannot be executed until the time is ripe for setting up Christ's kingdom. Then the demonstration will be complete, and corrective discipline is imperative in order to clear the ground for the righteous rule of God's Messiah.

But *individuals* will not be judged until later, at the great white throne. During their lifetime both saint and sinner sigh for the correction of injustice and misfortune. Many efforts are made, apart from government, to remedy wrongs and cure inequalities, but the net results are very disappointing when we consider the world as a whole. In the city where this is written there is a "community chest" and an enormous public hospital, besides numerous other agencies designed to deal with poverty and distress, but the poor and the ill only increase, even under the most favorable circumstances. God could end this condition in a short time if it were His intention, but He does not interpose. Crime increases and injustice abounds, but He does not intervene.

### **THE POSTPONEMENT OF JUDGMENT**

The postponement of both national and individual judgment brings with it one of the most perplexing problems for the unbeliever, and the delay in giving their awards to the saints is very trying for their faith. Although it is of the utmost consequence and for the highest benefit for the race, men do not want to be brought low, and do not wish to wait for a future recompense, because they do not realize that this is God's prepared plan for *their* own benefit, as well as for the blessing of the *universe*, and for *His* own highest bliss. All of mankind must learn to realize what He is to them by an actual experience of what it means to be without Him. Then they will be able to give Him the unforced outflow of their hearts. Then they will appreciate it when His judgments permanently right all wrongs and eliminate all evil, through the suffering Sacrifice He has provided.

Today the saints mix a measure of atheism with the Mosaic law and Paul's epistles, and seldom realize what a mess it makes. They want judgment now, so as to get their rights according to the law, but they realize also that they need grace for their shortcomings. As they do not get what they want, they lose the sense of God's presence, if they ever had it, and shut Him out of their lives whenever He does not come up to their expectations. It is only as we see by faith that, at present, the evil in the world is according to the Scriptures, and an essential ingredient in God's, plan, and also the only way to the highest blessing for ourselves and for the race, as well as all creation, that we grasp its

necessity as a background for the display of His grandest glories and perpetual praise. And then are we prepared to endure with thankful hearts all the trials and tragedies which He sends to us.

Is God judging now? This is a very practical question for all of us. If He is, how can we be satisfied with what He does? A Bible reader who applies the Psalms to himself must be sorely disappointed at times, for there God promises to protect and bless all who trust in Jehovah. He does not redeem such assurances now. The reason is clear. He *was* judging indirectly then, through the law given to Israel. None of the Psalms, not merely the so-called "imprecatory" Psalms, are applicable now.

Judgment is further complicated in our minds by nature and nature's laws. They operate without fail or favor for either saint or sinner. The just and the unjust are often engulfed in the same doom. The saintliest of the saints seems to have no prerogative. They are swept away by the same storm or crushed by the same earthquake. An "act of God" has come to mean the destructive force of nature. It is seldom, if ever, applied to the beneficial blessings which abound in the physical forces that surround us.

A comprehensive knowledge of God's postponed judgments should help us to endure with patience and long-suffering the "light afflictions," which seem such a heavy burden to us now. These are essential features of the evil eons. It is not neglect or carelessness on His part, but perfect planning. In the future land of glory that awaits us, God will be *all* in His saints. Their bliss in resurrection will depend on the continual and unbroken operation of His spirit in them, so that judgment will be unneeded and unknown.

### THE CONDEMNATION OF ALL

About a dozen times the Authorized Version renders the word *judgment condemnation* or *damnation*, and half as often they change *judge*, to *condemn* or *damn*, and *judging* to *condemnation* or *damnation*. This itself is to be drastically *condemned*, for when the translators damned others, they themselves were far more guilty, because they sinned against light and mutilated the most precious possession of mankind. With this before him, the editor of the Concordant Version text was inclined to choose the word *judge* rather than *condemn*, when the reading of the original was not absolutely certain. In the final occurrence of *judge*, dealing with the fate of those before the great white throne, however, he was compelled against his inclination to read *condemn*, where the Authorized Version has simply *judge*. The Greek texts differ at this place, but the best of them, Sinaiticus, reads *condemn*. In this text there are many omissions, and, as the three letters *kat* which made the difference, could easily be omitted, but hardly be added, they deserve a place, as they probably were found in the original. Even if rendered *judge*, the fact that all were condemned is clearly established from other passages.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that Adam's one offense brings condemnation to all mankind (Rom.5:18). Not only shall God *judge* the world (Rom.3:6), but not one will be found just—*not even one* (Rom.3:10). One sin brought condemnation (Rom.5:16). These things are racial, and go back to Adam for their origin and scope. It is not an individual matter. The great white throne judging does not determine this. It was known long before. It simply confirms the previous verdict, after considering the acts of those who inherited mortality from Adam. The same is true of justification. It will not depend on the acts of those who enjoy it, but upon Christ, and *His* obedience. When Paul, upon a later occasion, speaks of condemnation, he makes it worldwide (1 Cor. 11:32). Moreover, everyone who accepts Christ thereby acknowledges condemnation apart from Him. Only in Christ Jesus is any mortal of Adam's race free from condemnation (Rom.8:1).

"Punishment" is a word that I have come to hate, for men have so fearfully misused it of God's

operations. Once we see that all of God's dealings are with a view to the eventual reconciliation of all, the idea of punitive retribution, introduced by corrupt theology, will become abhorrent. If the great white throne sentenced all those who stand before it to eternal torment or annihilation, such a thought might be entertained. But we must remember that the object of all God's operations are rooted in love and fruited in reconciliation. If God is love, He cannot be orthodox. The experience before the great white throne must prepare each one for the consummation, for that is what lies before him. Before there can be a universal reconciliation, each one must be set right with God, and this is accomplished at the judging. Such, indeed, is the true meaning of judgment, which is almost lost, because of the penal character of human adjudication.

The orthodox "hell" completely nullifies all judging and justice. What is the sense of bringing anyone before a judge if he has already been suffering torment for a thousand years and is due to undergo the same eternally, no matter what his sentence is? Such a system would not be tolerated even among the most unjust and cruel of mankind. Justice demands that the sentence suit the crime. It must be adaptable to the most innocent infant as well as the most ungodly adult. This is impossible if the term is infinite, for infinity does not admit of gradations. Moreover it is highly immoral to torment anyone without some useful end. A man who would be guilty of such a thing would be adjudged mad, and confined in an asylum.

### RIGHT AND WRONG

The only possible way to determine right from wrong is to acknowledge first of all the place and purpose of God. None of our rights can rest on injustice to Him. We cannot have any clear idea of the nature of the great white throne judgment unless we know what will accrue to God by means of it. Perhaps the most terrible misconception of its function has come from the unscriptural and abominable teaching that all who are judged will be tormented forever in the lake of fire which follows it. In that case it is utterly futile and harmful, and so sheer injustice to God, for He will lose all and gain nothing as a reward for His vast expenditure of creative power and provision. The injustices that men have practiced toward men—*and how great is the sum of them!*—not all of them together would amount to so unspeakable an injustice as that men's acts should not be righted in their relation toward the *Deity*, so that *He* may reap the harvest of His work.

What is right? Man has no standard by which to determine this except the feeble flicker of conscience and the munitions of nature. We will probably discover, some day, that most of his rights were wrongs, and even that which seemed altogether right contained an admixture of wrong. This is difficult to discuss unless we take a concrete example. The best is property rights. You have a certificate of title to a piece of land. You can trace its ownership back until someone took it "by right of discovery" perhaps. But what right is that? The land was created by God, and belongs to Him until He gives a valid title, which He will never do because you cannot pay for it, and it is not for sale. Property rights! They will never be right until they revert into the hands of the only rightful Owner and Creator. With this background it would be easy to quiet all the titles in the world in an instant, and, at the same time *give God His rights*, and His creatures theirs. In this way God will become the universal Owner. All their rights will be found only in Him. So He will become their All.

Is it not significant that, at the great white throne, both earth and heaven flee? Those who are raised at that time cannot claim that part of the earth which they owned at death. In some cases there might be a thousand claimants, and that would only lead to interminable contention, not to a final, righteous settlement. During their lifetime some of them laid claim to vast estates, while others did not even own the ground in which they were buried. But now none have even standing room on the

earth, which seems to show that they had forfeited what they had, and that it has reverted to the rightful Owner. Some probably laid claim to a "mansion," or at least a corner in heaven, on the ground of their goodness and gifts. They also find that their title to a celestial place has no foundation. This alone should impress them with the utter unrighteousness of their rights and their failure to recognize God's.

This is the fatal failure in almost all human justice. The relations between men are adjusted without any regard for the rights of the Creator, the Sustainer, the true Beneficiary. All is *for Him*, first of all. This modifies and may cancel every right that we seek to claim for ourselves. The innumerable and inextricable maze of man's inhumanity to man would present an almost impossible and interminable problem at the judgment if human rights were not readjusted to God's. The Son of God will be there to affectionately press His Father's claims, which will open the eyes of mankind to see that the "rights" for which they otherwise would contend are selfishness, egotism, unfounded pride, the repudiation of God's rights. The Pharisee will not stand up in the judgment to boast in his tithes. He once imagined that he had settled his score with God, that he had given Him what was right. Then he will see that he had robbed God of nine-tenths of His due, for *all* that he had was a gift from the All-Sufficient. The Pharisee prayed to himself, and was well pleased with his treatment of Jehovah, but all his righteousness was iniquity.

The tribute collector did not talk to himself, or compare himself with others, but anticipated the judgment by renouncing all claims to righteousness. He had no confidence in himself that he was just, so asked only for a propitiatory shelter. Yet *he* was justified, rather than the Pharisee. I suppose that, from the merely human viewpoint, this was a gross miscarriage of justice. The Pharisee probably was an exemplary character, who tried to keep the law, and was orthodox in his interpretation of the Scriptures. He claimed that, if others were unjust, he was not. Under ordinary circumstances such people would rise in the judging and contend for their own righteousness. The Pharisees would insist that they are right and the tribute collectors are wrong. What an endless debate there would be if all of those before the great white throne should try to settle all disputes among themselves as they do in this life! But if all is made bare and open, the opposite will be the case. All will be condemned by the realization of their utter failure to be just to God.

We know two things concerning the human race. All will be condemned and all will be justified (Rom.5:18). Before they can be justified they must realize their condemnation. This cannot come about by debating the matter from the human standpoint, as Job and his friends did, but by divine intervention, as when Jehovah compared Himself with Job and asked him if he needed to condemn God in order to justify himself (Job 40:8). Elihu's anger was hot against Job for justifying his own soul rather than God (32:2). Even the Psalmist knew that no one of all the living shall be just before God (Psa.143:2). But what a tedious and terrible and interminable time it would be if every case were tried as Job's was! If such a session were held today almost everyone, like him, would seek to justify himself, although few, if any, would have as good a right. At the same time others, with a different standard of right, like Job's friends, would condemn all who do not agree with them. As Zophar said to Job, it is all lip-talk, man's many words of self-justification (Job 11:2).

When it comes to right and wrong, men and nations have forgotten and ignored God. They have lost the fear of Him because He does not interfere. There have been notable attempts to deal justly among men, but seldom, indeed, are God's rights taken into account. William Penn refused to recognize the claim of the English crown to the territory of Pennsylvania, although he paid the king his price. Later, he bought it again from the Indians. Most men would consider this much more than just. But was it? Or was it simply buying from the receivers of stolen goods? The king's title to it

was a very poor one, as Penn himself realized. But was that of the Indians much better? Who knows but that they also took it by violence. Even if they were the first settlers, that did not make it theirs. What rivers of blood have been shed in order to seize lands in the possession of others! It could all have been spared if the contending parties had recognized the only Owner of all things and based all their claims on His right to dispose of it as He wills. At the great white throne, right will no longer be based on the futile claims of men. They never believed this, but then they *see* that their rights are wrong, because they rob God of His rights.

In contrast to human judgments, our Lord emphasized the character of His judging. It is always *just* and *true* (John 5:30; 7:24; 8:16). He will not condemn without cause. Indeed, it would almost seem as if, in judging, He will not need to condemn at all, for men themselves will attend to this (compare Rom.2:3). Ninevite men, who heard and heeded the heralding of Jonah, will condemn those who heard and did not heed our Lord. The queen of the south will condemn them also, for she came from far to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and they would not listen to the One Who is the Wisdom of God (Matt.12:41,42). I am practically certain that the judging will be of such a nature that all will condemn each other, and be themselves condemned when all is exposed and made bare in the presence of the great white throne.

Today all is camouflaged. No act is seen as it is. Sin seeks to work in secret. Motives behind men's acts are hid. Men pay more attention to the outward appearance than to the inward reality. In the judging this will be reversed. Everything that is now covered shall be revealed. What is hidden shall be made known (Matt.10:26; Mark 4:22; Luke 12:2). Then the hidden things of humanity will be judged (Rom.2:16). This will probably reverse many a human judgment automatically, without any tedious investigations, or any attempts to evade or distort the open evidence. To my mind this, though painful, will be most wholesome for all concerned, and is absolutely essential to their future welfare. There can be no consummation without it. No reconciliation with God can be considered apart from it. How can God be All in anyone who harbors secret sin, and who does not begin to realize how far he falls short of His holiness? Once we see that judging is the necessary preparation for reconciliation, we will not only bear with it, or acquiesce in it, but we will be thankful for it, and praise God for this provision.

Men send criminals to the penitentiary for life in order to shield society from them. God deals with sinners during a short judgment period in order to prepare them perfectly for endless association with their fellows and with Him. The object of His judging is not to requite the sinner evil for evil, and make him suffer for his badness, but to correct and remove the hindrances to his company. In many cases this may involve severe suffering, but, when compared with the benefits that spring from it, we are reminded of the "light" afflictions of the apostle, which were very heavy, yet lost their weight when compared with the eonian glory to which they were the prelude. Indeed, Paul's glory was limited to the eons, while the reconciliation of God's enemies at the consummation will be endless. The greatest sum imaginable dwindles down to nothing when compared with infinity.

David was given his choice of being judged by Jehovah or by men. His experience with both led him to decide instantly, and he exclaimed, "Let me fall now into the hands of the Lord, for very many are His mercies. *But let me not fall into the hands of men.*" It is instructive to note the alternative judgments, especially their length. He was given the choice of three *month's* fleeing before his foes, overtaken by the sword of his enemies, or three *days* of the sword of the Lord, the pestilence (1 Chron.21:13). Everywhere we see that God's judgments are swift, and are soon over, while man's are slow, the agony is long, drawn out. So, we have every reason to think the great assize will be a short period of time. David's penalty was, indeed, severe, for seventy thousand died before their time. But

it accomplished its object. The king had been provoked by Satan to count the number of Israel. This showed that David was trusting in numbers, not in God. He was leaning on man, not on Jehovah. Therefore a large part of his host was taken from him, and David was moved to prepare for the temple on mount Moriah, where Jehovah's worship was carried on during the reigns of the rest of the kings of Israel. Satan was defeated and God glorified, and David recalled to trust in Him alone. God, to a great degree, became his All.

In our Lord's description of other judgments we may gather some idea of what He deems the just procedure. To His disciples He said that a slave who *knows* his lord's will, yet ignores it, shall have many lashes. But one who does *not* know, even if he deserves blows, will have few. Then He laid down a rule which will probably apply at the great white throne also: As to everyone to whom much was given, from him much will be sought, and to whom they committed much, more excessively will they be requesting of him (Luke 12:47,48). This has a direct bearing on the case of infants, who know practically nothing, and the heathen, who are ignorant of God's Word and will. I shudder, not at the fate of these two classes, but at the terrible fate which would overtake those who have delved deeply into His revelation, if they were not exempt from judgment through the sacrifice of Christ. Yes, we, who know His will, and are such great failures in carrying it out, we would probably receive the most lashes, and deserve the severest blows.

### **JUDGMENT IS ADAPTED TO GUILT**

The severity of judgment will depend largely upon opportunity. The same sin will call down heavy inflictions on one and light correction on another. All agree that it is not just to punish indiscriminately. Those who sin against light are ever so much more accountable than those who fail for lack of light. Most people imagine that, of all cities, Sodom was one of the worst, hence its citizens will suffer the severest penalties in the judging. And it is very likely that the cities of our Lord's day, to whom He sent His kingdom heralds, deemed themselves the most righteous of all mankind, so that their correction, if any, would be very mild. Our Lord reversed this in the case of those who did not receive His heralds. He said that it would be *more tolerable* for Sodom in that day than for that city (Luke 10:10-12)! Is it too much to deduce from this that it will be more tolerable for the "heathen" than for "Christendom?" I am convinced of this. Consequently, if the object of our "gospel" is to save people suffering, there is more need at home than abroad.

More than this, Tyre and Sidon, we are told, would have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes, if they had had the same display of power in their midst as Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, His own city (Luke 10:13-15). Is it right, then, to put them on the same level? What an indictment of the nominal people of Jehovah! Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum were not among the cities that refused to receive His heralds. He did many of His marvels in their midst, Yet the despised cities of the nations shall be dealt with more leniently than they. Does not this reverse our traditional ideas of the place which the "heathen" will have in that day? How blessed it is for those in enlightened lands who actually accept God's grace and Christ's salvation! If they had not, they would be answerable to a much greater degree than the heathen. And does this not throw some light on the fate of infants and children as well? How inexpressibly more tolerable will it be for them than for more mature members of the race!



## **The Dais or “Judgment Seat”**

GOD HAS SWORN that He will win the worship of every knee and the acclaim of every tongue. Before His *bema*, or dais, all must come (Rom.14:11). This is in full accord with His purpose to reconcile all to Himself at the consummation (Col.1:20). Then, after the unbeliever has been judged and vivified, it will be fully accomplished. But those who believe will come to this blessed end long before, in the former resurrection, when Israel's saints are raised, and, still earlier, when those of this secret administration are presented at the dais of Christ, and each gives an account of himself to God (Rom.14:12).

Hitherto we have stressed the grand purpose of God to save and justify and vivify all mankind and finally reconcile the universe. It may be well in the future to press to the attention of all who love God and revel in His Word this still more precious and fundamental truth. Not only will all His creatures obtain blessing, but *HE will be glorified by all. God Himself* is the great Beneficiary of His marvelous operations. I sincerely hope that even those who refuse to believe His plain declarations concerning the blessing of all His enemies, will not deny that *He* will get the worship of *every* knee and the acclamation of *every* tongue, for *His oath is back of it*.

All will give account of themselves at the two great crises of the eons. For the unbeliever it will take place at the great white throne, after the present earth is swept away. For the believer it may come in the near future, between the evil and the good eons, in preparation for the millennium on earth or our removal to the celestials. In brief, it follows man's present existence in humiliation and distress, and precedes his future life in glory and bliss. And this is just what should be expected. So long as mankind fails to give God His due, there can be and should be no blessing worthy of the name. But when the race or any part of it comes to the full acknowledgement of the Deity, blessing is bound to overflow.

The dais will be the second great crisis in our experience. When we first believed, most of us were exercised concerning our sins. Faith in the blood of Christ relieved us of all condemnation. We were happy because our acts would not be reckoned against us. But what we were was not so satisfactory. Being still mortal, we soon found that we were not freed from sin's *presence*, and by no means delivered from its *power*. In order to please God we had to *die* to sin. *Death* and *crucifixion* are the means of escape from its thralldom now. But this will be reversed in the resurrection. Then we will enjoy *life* and *glory*. We will be rid of the very presence of sin and free from its power, because we will be immortal. The dais is the introduction to this. Our whole past will be put into the crucible for final assay, so that all the vexing and troublesome problems of the present will be settled, and whatever is of value will be preserved.

The key words which describe the dais are *illumination*, *manifestation*, *requital* and *applause*. These are closely connected with judgment, but the sting has been withdrawn. They are not due to God's indignation, as is the case with the unbeliever, but to His holiness, which insists on the removal of all that might be, a source of evil in the future. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and reveal the counsels of the heart (1 Cor.4:5). The true value of our service lies in the *motive* back of it, not in its apparent success or failure. If it is done for His glory alone, it will not fail to find applause. But if it is centered in self, it will not survive the fire. Yet we will be glad to see it vanish.

It is helpful to note that the *bema*, or dais, occurs only in those portions of Paul's epistles which deal with *conduct*, in the second half of Romans and in Corinthians. It is not mentioned where the evangel is in view. It is concerned with the *deportment* of the saints, and does not affect their *salvation*. Justification is *not* of works, but the dais deals *altogether* with deeds. The gratuity in one is *grace*, the other is a test by *fire*. The judgment of Christ on the cross in the past settled for our sins, the dais of Christ in the future will reward us for our service. In our meditations may we always remember the vast contrasts between these great themes, lest we lose the joy of our salvation by basing it in the least degree upon ourselves.

Justification frees from all condemnation. It is not limited to our sins as unbelievers. It includes what we do as believers. The righteousness that is ours in Christ is divine. God transmutes our every act, by the alchemy of the cross, into a source of glory to Himself and blessing to His creatures. Yet this does not imply that we are sinless in ourselves, or that we should continue as before. By the illumination of God's Word we learn about ourselves and seek to shun evil and aim to do good. But we are much hindered by the flesh, which is still with us. This is a slow process, which is never completed in this life. In the resurrection, however, with our incorruptible bodies, the whole process is perfected before the dais.

Many, however, are inclined to dread that future test, especially if their conscience is not clear, or their relations to their fellow saints leave something to be desired. This is a wholesome fear, but let us be thankful that we are not called upon to endure the test in our present, mortal bodies. When we are presented before Him, we will be clothed with powerful, glorious frames, and will be able to endure the searching fiery flames. Moreover, we will welcome anything that will clear up all the differences and dissensions that have marred our fellowship while on earth. There is no one to decide our cause until our Lord Himself does so in that day.

The dais of Christ is not only concerned with the service of the saints in relation to their Lord, but one of its chief functions is to clear up the relations between the saints, in view of the future. After the dais there will be no need to bear and forbear, for immortality will incline us to do right, just as the dying process now makes us do wrong. There will be no need for grace in dealing with one another after that. All that will need settling is the past. God's searchlight will illumine all. Right and wrong will, be instantly apparent, and we will be glad to see our bad destroyed and our wrongs requited.

Any judging or setting of things right while we are in our mortal, soulish bodies is bound to be a painful procedure. The unbeliever will find it so at the great white throne. We would find it so if we should seek to straighten out everything in this life. It is not pleasant to realize that we have been in the wrong. The more sensitive our conscience is, the more miserable we feel at the thought of displeasing God or harming His people, or any of His creatures. It is a vast relief to look forward to a time when all will be cleared up by the only One Who is competent, and when our frames will be able to bear knowing the worst, because it will no longer be a soulish, or sentient body, but a spiritual organism competent and eager to cope with the matter once for all, in order that nothing be left to mar the future bliss.

Is it not evident that all differences of doctrine and deportment must be cleared up before we can enter fully into the service that awaits us in the future? Now our forbearance and grace and love needs exercise. But then all of us will be like Him, and nothing can come between us to mar our fellowship or service for the future. But our *past* needs to be fully purged, for our own sake as well as for that of our fellow saints. We must be illuminated as to our own mistakes, and the motives of all must become manifest. Now much is obscure and secret. Motives are misunderstood and

misrepresented. All is largely superficial and artificial. Only God and His Christ can bring this into the open. And it will not be done, until we are presented before the dais. Until then we must act in grace.

There is only One Who can preside and decide between the saints in matters of conduct. Our Lord is alive and vitally interested in all that concerns His own. He alone knows the heart and evaluates the motives. After all, the relation of one saint to another and their treatment of each other is a minor matter compared with the attitude of each one toward God. So that, primarily, everything is being ordered so as to bring *worship and praise to Him*. That will be the principal purpose of His dais. All the conduct of the saints, whether good or bad, will contribute to this. There will be worship from all hearts when they see the glories of His grace in contrast to their fearful failures, and there will be praise exultant when they are commended for their good deeds, notwithstanding the forfeits for their bad. Then will be fulfilled what is written:

For to Me shall bow every knee,  
And every tongue shall be acclaiming God.

### SIN OR SINS NOT AT THE DAIS

Although neither sin nor sins are mentioned in connection with the dais, it is difficult for us to avoid injecting these. Indeed, is it not logical to reason that *bad practices* (2 Cor.5:10) must be sins? And if we shall give account concerning ourselves, would this not involve many mistakes? Such reasoning, even though it seems to be logical, is not wise, because it is not of *faith*. Faith would rather deduce that, since the word sin, or sins, is not employed of the dais, the character of our acts as viewed there must be different, and accord with the terms that are used. If this is so, then there is no such thing as the adjudication of sins at the dais, and the apparent contradiction vanishes.

If the different usages of *sin* and *sins* were clearly defined, it would help us to see why *sin* is not in view at the dais. A single mistake is a missing of the mark, or a *sin*. Several of them would be *sins*. But the singular, *sin*, or missing the mark, is also used as a name for the inclination, the tendency, which resides in our mortal flesh. It is usually called a "principle" or a "sinful nature," but these terms are vague and misleading, for human *nature* leads us to do what the law demands (Rom.2:14) and sin is *unprincipled*. *Death*, or dying, is what makes us sinners (Rom.5:12). *We will not be sinners* in this sense at the dais, because, at that time, we will be immortal and will have no inclination to sin.

Immortality not only makes us sinless at the dais, but makes us immune to the penalties due to sin, the affliction and distress which will be the portion of all the "dead" who stand before the great white throne (Rom.2:9; Rev.20:12). The body which we will then possess will be an incorruptible, powerful, glorious, spiritual body (1 Cor.15:42-44). The inflictions which will be the portion of the sinner must be kept within his endurance or his soul would leave his body and the suffering would end. But we would not find even the lake of fire, which is the second death, unbearable. Even if the sins of the believer had not been borne and put away by Christ's sacrifice, the judgment due to them could not be inflicted at the dais. The problem there belongs to another and different realm.

When we treat another badly, or are injured ourselves, this will be transmuted into a righteous act in God's great program through the sacrifice of Christ. But that does not *requite us* for our injury, nor does it *recompense another* for the bad that we have done. This injustice still remains so far as we are concerned, notwithstanding our relationship to God and Christ. Besides, many a good act and some whole careers devoted to the service of God, demand recognition and approval and reward,

quite distinct from the glory which will be the portion of all the saints in this display of transcendent grace.

Good or bad, the lack of full faith, due to the activity of the flesh or to the wiles of the adversary on one hand, and faithfulness and the leading of God's spirit on the other, have caused unnumbered debts and deserts to be entered to the account of God's saints and servants, that have never been paid. All of these must be balanced, and the books closed at the dais, for there will be no further need to keep a record, seeing that there will be no evil or bad acts to enter, and the good will be rewarded without delay, for God no longer needs to hurt and humble us, for we will be able to please Him without hindrance.

### REQUITAL AT THE DAIS

A clear conception of the special term *requite* will help us to understand more clearly the procedure at the dais of Christ. Its stem, in Greek, denotes FETCH. The woman who rubbed our Lord's feet with attar *fetches* it in an alabaster vase (Luke 7:37). In the middle voice, however, it corresponds with our *recover* or *requite*. It is not a term used in law courts connected with crime, but denotes *compensation, reparation*, rather than *vengeance* or *retribution*. I was told many years ago that the Chinese settled all their accounts every New Year's day. All debts were paid and accounts collected. No one went to jail. All were requited. The books were balanced, and the year was begun with a clean slate. I doubt that this was ever fully accomplished, nevertheless it may serve as a weak illustration of the dais.

ALL will agree that some of God's servants deserve a special reward for their deeds. Hitherto, those ancient worthies who died in faith were not requited with the promises, but they certainly will be rewarded in the kingdom (Heb.11:13). So also the elders who supervise voluntarily, *not avariciously*, models for the flocklet, when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, will be requited with an unfading wreath of glory (1 Peter 5:1-4). The Circumcision saints who do the will of God will be requited with the promise. In their case definite promises have been made to them, and these will be their requital. To some extent this is true of us also.

Justification before God does not requite those whom we have injured, nor does their justification requite us for wrongs which they have committed against us. Ideal were it if all such things could be fully adjusted in this life, but this would not accord with the character of God's present operations. He deals in utmost grace, and the very wrongs which we are called upon to endure are opportunities which we should seize for displaying His grace to others. If there were a competent tribunal and we would have all our wrongs redressed as they occur, that would lower our whole life to the level of the kingdom eon, in which God's *righteousness* is revealed.

The fact that there is no one capable of deciding what is right or wrong, or the proper recompense, makes it futile to settle such matters now. They would probably be appealed to the dais anyway, as most of us are inclined to judge that we are right and others are wrong, because we cannot see beneath the surface or read the counsels of the hearts. In another connection Paul warns against judging before the season. Even he, with the clearest conscience, refused to forestall that day. All of us must be *manifested* in front of the dais of Christ before there can be a correct requital of what has been put into practice through the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor.5:10,11).

It is worthy of note that one of the best manuscripts, Vaticanus (B) reads *evil* in place of *bad* or FOUL in 2 Cor.5:10. This confirms the thought that *bad* belongs in the same category with *evil*, rather than with *sin*. We have shown elsewhere that God *creates evil* yet *does not sin*. So it is with our bad or evil acts. It seems that they, when viewed in the light of that day, are used by Him to humble us and

give us the experience of bad or evil, and the corresponding grace, which is needed to prepare us for our place in His purpose. I am thankful for the bad which comes to me, in a personal way, yet I realize that the exposure of my own evil and the loss it entails is just as essential as a firm basis for the future.

We should be most thankful if, in this life, we are able to requite for anything bad that we have done. It may mean a serious loss, yet all who have the spirit of God should not rest easy so long as they have injured a fellow creature. It may not be possible always to do this. I am sure no one would view the future glory with equanimity if anything of this sort still is against him. To requite all might be an intolerable burden now, added to our other infirmities. How gracious, then, is the postponement of requital until we are immortal, and well able to forfeit all that is necessary to square accounts with those who were associated with us in this life!

## ***The Problem of EVIL and The Judgments of GOD***

### ***Part 2 - Chapter 4***

# **Revealed by Fire**

IN THE Corinthian epistles, the dais is brought before us in connection with our *work* (3:12-15), especially the administration of God's secrets (4:1-5) and our good and bad practices (2 Cor.5:10). Corinth is a good background for all these aspects, as the saints there specialized in failure to live up to the truth and needed to be reminded of the future test which will be applied to it. It is especially helpful today when false motives and incentives and wrong standards are used in God's work, so that the most of it is only fit for the flames.

Paul used a fine figure in setting forth the *work* of the Corinthian ecclesia, especially the part played by himself and those who succeeded him there. It is represented as a building of which he laid the foundation and left the superstructure to others. The quality of the work is figured by materials of various value, but rated especially according to their fire-resistant qualities. Most of the monuments of antiquity which still remain are built of costly stones. Very little else is left of the temples on Mount Moriah but the large, expensive stones in the foundation. The gold and silver doubtless would still be there also if it had not been carried away. The work which will abide that day is figured by the mineral kingdom.

### **THE FIGURE OF THE FARMER**

The work of God's servants will earn *wages* at the dais of our Lord, even though He provides the very vigor with which it is accomplished. This is shown to us in the figure of the farmer. He plants and irrigates, but what would that avail if God did not make it grow? Without the life He stored in the seed and the warmth He sends from the sun, the seed would rot and the labor bestowed upon it would be in vain. Yet the farmer does not hesitate to harvest the crop. Too often he deems it his due, the product of his own toil, and forgets to give thanks to Him Whose beneficence it is (1 Cor.3:5-9).

Paul transfers this to himself and Apollos in a figure in order that the saints should not be puffed up for one or the other. In reality the farmer plays a very small part in the production of his crops, and this he owes to God (*cp* Isa.26:12; Prov.16:4). So it is in the Lord's service. Paul, as an evangelist, may lead the Corinthians to believe, and Apollos may foster their faith, but all would have been in vain without the vital power of God. Paul was only calling those whom God had already chosen. Before Paul preached, God assured him that He had many of His own in the city (Acts 18:17). Why, then, should they set these men up as if *they* had produced the crop? Neither one is to get the credit, but praise and thanksgiving should go to *God*, for He it was Who had provided them with the ability to do their part and inclined their wills accordingly (Psa.110:3).

The enlightened servant of God will not lay claim to anything at the dais of Christ. Without His life, His strength, His faith, His zeal, he would never have been able to lift his hand in the Lord's service. All of these were gifts from God, none inherent in himself. If an earthly master had made an automatic machine and it performed the part planned for it, does he pay it wages? But we are not machines, and God is not a man. He will get His heart's desire in the love engendered by His operations. And to further fan this affection, He pays wages where little has actually been earned or deserved. His servants will be rewarded according to their toil (1 Cor.3:8).

### **THE FIGURE OF THE BUILDER**

But the *amount* of work done by anyone is not necessarily an index of its value in God's sight. In order to illuminate this aspect of service, Paul uses a different figure, that of a building. The growing of a crop is a seasonal effort and produces no permanent results. A building is erected to *last* indefinitely, depending upon the materials used. There is going to be a fire in the future which will consume our whole building except that which will stand the flames. We should, therefore, be very choice in our materials, and use only such as will abide the conflagration.

The two classes of materials will seem very strange to us at first glance. We do not erect buildings out of gold and silver and precious stones. If we did, they would be very small! We do use wood, grass, and straw, and with these we can make a marvelous show. Aside from the value of the materials, the principal difference is that the former are fireproof, the latter inflammable. The true servant of God will seek to use nothing in edifying the saints that will not stand the fire! Apollos was the builder in Corinth, after Paul had laid the foundation, hence the figure is to be explained by his ministry there. He was their teacher.

We are introduced to Apollos as follows (Acts 18:24): "Now a certain Jew, named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, a scholarly man, arrives at Ephesus, being able in the Scriptures. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught *accurately* what concern Jesus, being versed only in the baptism of John. Besides he begins to speak boldly in the synagogue. Now, hearing him, Priscilla and Aquila took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him *more accurately*." The material, then, consisted of the teaching which he imparted to the Corinthians. And it is the *accuracy* of his doctrines that leads us to think that Apollos used a good deal of gold and silver in his construction, which will remain to his credit in that day.

### THE BUILDING MATERIALS

We may rest assured that neither Paul nor Apollos erected a church building in Corinth, especially not of literal gold and silver and precious stones. Yet there is ample evidence in the epistle itself that these are the materials they used, in contrast to the wood, grass and straw, which is so freely used today, not, indeed, in the literal buildings, but in the spiritual edification of the saints. In this passage Paul and Apollos are *teachers*, and we should consider their *doctrine* if we wish to recognize what each material represents. Yet this letter is not a systematic statement of their teaching, so it is not so easy to identify the materials as in Romans, which sets forth their message in clearly defined aspects. Corinthians is more of a laboratory than a text book. So we turn to Romans and its three great themes, justification, reconciliation, and the deity of God, to explain the figure.

In Romans we have three distinct divisions of the doctrine which Paul dispensed in Corinth. Justification is the great basic truth on which all is built. This may well be figured by the great stones, the precious stones, such as were used in erecting the temple. This is the manward side of the evangel. Then comes conciliation and reconciliation, figured by the silver. This is mutual, because both man and God must be conciliated before there can be reconciliation. Then there is the gold, God's subjectorship, the Deity as Disposer, the divine aspect of our evangel, the most glorious of all. *All of these doctrines are eternal, everlasting*. They will abide, even after the consummation, when all mankind will be justified and all creation reconciled, and God becomes All in all. No fire will ever destroy these eternal verities.

### THE GOLD

The gold is God's glory as the great Disposer. It is most deplorable to see even intelligent saints shrink from giving the Deity His proper place as God, and deny the plainest declarations of Holy Writ. The golden *All is out of Him*, is degraded into the wooden "man's free moral agency." Or, it

may be that all *good* is acknowledged to be out of Him, or all *essential* to His plan, or some other of many desperate restrictions which would leave man a share in divine glory. How can God be *All in all*, until all of this has been burned up? Let us take heed that, above all else, we do not infringe on the glory that is God's alone, for we may rest assured that the fire will eagerly devour all that hinders Him from taking His place supreme in the beginning as well as at the consummation. *All is out of Him! All is through Him! All is for Him!*

### THE SILVER

The true relationship between God and man at the present time is practically unknown, hence is not preached from our pulpits. The silver doctrine that the

p152 Truth Alone will Last death of God's Son has conciliated Him to mankind is not only ignored, but strenuously opposed by both priests and people. Instead we have the grass of fear and threats of purgatory and hell, of law keeping and religion, all of which is fit only for the fire and cannot last in the coming eons or the consummation, when God wipes all tears away in the last eon and reconciles the whole universe at the consummation. Let us bum up all such futile and inflammable doctrine now rather than wait until the dais. Then we will be thankful to see it feed the flames.

### THE PRECIOUS STONES

In English idiom the word "precious" as applied to stones is limited to small gems or jewels of great beauty or rarity, but in the Scriptures it is also used of large, hewn building-stones. Some of these were much more expensive than the average gem, because of the great labor involved in quarrying and cutting and transporting them. The order of the words--gold, silver, precious stones--suggests that jewels are not in view, for they are more precious than gold. Besides, few would care to test them by fire. A close friend of mine had a process of making small commercial jewels by means of a retort. In a figure such as this there should be no question of their fire-resistance.

In the Orient one often sees buildings that have been ravaged by fire and tested by the tooth of time. In the great temples at Athens and Baalbek and Jerusalem there is not much left of their ancient architecture except stones, many of them tremendous in size and great in cost. Their *lasting* quality is most striking in the midst of magnificent ruins. As the figure here is in contrast with *straw*, which was often used for fuel and seldom survives a single year, such stones as these are most impressive when used to suggest a doctrine.

In Romans it would stand for *justification*. Again, we sigh at the almost total lack of teaching on this tremendous theme. Even when the word is used, the sense is diluted to pardon or forgiveness of sins, such as belongs to the kingdom administration. In the land of Luther I attended meetings in his own house, along with several hundred other editors of Protestant religious publications, and I found no evidence that any of them, with perhaps one exception, really grasped its vital significance. Some of them were excessively zealous, and ready for any sacrifice for the cause of their Lord, yet they were engaged in teaching that which would be food for the flames at the dais. The pardon of sins is a temporary measure, limited to the kingdom heralding, which will be obsolete when all men are justified at the consummation.

It will be seen from this that the teaching which will come through the fire and call for wages has two distinctive features, which may help us to identify it and avoid that figured by the wood, the grass and the straw. The picture of houses built of wood, grass and straw is not put before us because these are not good building materials. Many a shelter from the elements is built entirely of them. The house in which this is written is built mostly of wood, the outside being an almost rot-proof siding and shingles of so-called "redwood." It has lasted for many years and is still good. But it certainly



will not stand a test by fire! So it is with much of the teaching in Christendom today. Salvation is brought to men by some of it, and the saints are helped. But most of the teaching belongs to the kingdom. It is not only out of place now, but it will not pass the fiery inspection of the dais.

Not only must our teaching be Paul's rather than Peter's, but it must be fireproof. It must be such that it will never be destroyed or replaced. That is the special characteristic of the evangel for today. It is *everlasting*. It is not only true of the saints now, but will be expanded to include all at the consummation. *We* are justified now, and *all mankind* will enjoy it after the eons. *We* are reconciled now, and *all creation* will be included when God is All in all. God is All in *us* now. He will be All in *all* at the consummation.

### THE KIND OF WORK THAT REMAINS

Quite often in our work we reach retired ministers and elderly servants of Christ, who have spent most of their lives in the usual channels of service. When they grasp some of the precious truths which we bring to them, such as the final reconciliation of all and the conciliation of the nations now, the divine mysteries, the function of evil, and so forth, they almost all exclaim, O, that I had known these things long ago! They realize that much of the materials which they used in edifying the saints will go up in smoke at the dais, yet they would not have it otherwise. They could not accept wages for work which must be wiped away in that day. No longer do they deem the amount imposing, for they recognize that the kind makes all the difference.

On the other hand, we are greatly heartened by those who are still young or in their prime, much of whose ministry still lies before them, when they voluntarily make a bonfire of many of their past beliefs and teach the Word more accurately for the rest of their careers. The very fact that most of us have already thrown much to the flames should show that we will be eager in that day to consign the rest to the fiery test. If we do not want to lose all our work in that day, we should emulate Apollos, and teach the Scriptures accurately, and, when we learn of the further light which has come through the apostle Paul to the nations, then we will be able to teach it more accurately.

### THE FIERY REVELATION

These examples, which forestall the process at the dais, may also help us to understand how it will proceed. The *fire* will *reveal*. The case of each one need not necessarily come before the whole ecclesia and be examined and passed upon in detail. Would that not be an interminable and intolerable trial? Even if each one took only a minute of time, which would hardly be possible, the session would last longer than the millennium. What a sad one that would be for us! Israel on the earth would be enjoying peace and plenty and prosperity, and we would be concerned with our past failings and that of all the others in the ecclesia! Would it not be a perpetual pain?

Instead of a long drawn-out judgment session with interminable testimonies and endless evidence in order to ferret out the facts, each case, or all together, will be *revealed by fire*. In the city where this is written a case of alleged illegal picketing is being tried in which there are hundreds of defendants. The trial has already dragged on for months. Now the unwieldy mass has been split into groups. But quite a few have decided that the trial was already worse than the sentence could be, and have paid their fine, in order to be relieved of further annoyance. How much simpler and better if a flash of flame had revealed an infallible verdict!

Few of the Lord's servants are sufficiently illuminated to forestall the flames. Indeed, the most enlightened would refuse to claim infallibility, and insist that their earlier groping among the fogs of orthodoxies made it impossible for them to build with fire-resistant materials, no matter how clear their conscience may be as to the present. And, indeed, it is not wise to be overly concerned as to the

past, but attend to the present, that we do not continue to build for the fire in the future.

Fire is the finest purifier. Let us be clear that it will not be a lake of fire for the saints. Yet even if we were cast into fire at the dais, that would not harm us. Being immortal, with spiritual bodies, we would not feel it and it would not affect us. However, the figure of fire is not used of the *saints*, but of their *work* as servants of Christ in building up the saints. Paul and Apollos were *teachers*. They taught the Corinthians. Literally their teaching was either truth or error, fact or fiction. Truth remains, even in the hereafter. Error cannot. It must be destroyed. This will be done by the revelation given to us at the dais. Even temporary truths must be replaced by eternal verities.

It goes without saying that error must vanish in the future. The intolerable state of the church today would turn the bliss of heaven into the horrors of an orthodox hell if infinitely protracted and magnified. Were error corrected today it would mean untold agony for many servants of our Lord. Their frail frames could not bear to see how little is the value of their labors and how much is only fit for the flames. Even if the fire did not touch their persons, it would bow down their souls and afflict their spirits. It does this to some degree even if their illumination is gradual and the source of much joy and satisfaction. How gracious is it that the full light does not fall upon our deeds until we are furnished with bodies so powerful and glorious that we will only be glad to be rid of our errors once for all!

### **FIRE AND FORFEIT**

In order that our teaching in regard to the dais should not be destroyed in that day, we should consider accurately the terms used. The mere mention of fire and loss is disturbing to the infirm in faith, who think of everything in terms of their own felicity for the future. We wish to impress on them that these words assure their permanent happiness, rather than threaten it. The fire does not take anything that will contribute to our welfare in the future, but rather removes the hindrances to perfect bliss.

Paul himself has already suffered the loss of all things (Phil.3:8), because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ. He has already, in spirit, burned up his wooden doctrines. He had taken great pride in his race and religion. Judaism was everything to him. His own law-righteousness was his most prized possession. But when he learned the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, he *forfeited* all this. He could not have both. Did he regret his forfeiture of "the righteousness which is in law"? By no means! He considered it no better than refuse to be rid of. So will it be with us at the dais. Much may be forfeited, but nothing of *lasting* value will be lost. All the transitory error which clings to us now will be permanently removed and replaced by eternal truth, thus preparing us for felicity everlasting.

## **Suffering and Endurance**

SUFFERING AND SHAME are not our portion at the dais. But they are our high privilege at present, in preparation for it. Instead of facing a future "hell" or "purgatory" or "judgment seat," with punishment as our lot, we may endure evil with the evangel now and, as a reward, we will reign together with Christ in glory.

One of Paul's latest letters is much concerned with the future and the requital of "that day." This phrase is found thrice in his second epistle to Timothy (1:12,18; 4:8). In each case it is associated with suffering evil, (1:8; 2:9; 4:5). The suffering of the saint is *not at the dais*, but *in view of it*. It is not inflicted by God, but *man*, not for *sin*, but for *faithfulness* and *endurance*. It will lead, not to a second *death*, but to an abundant *life* and rare reward. We need not *dread* suffering at the dais, but *endure* it now, and *enjoy* it in anticipation of that day.

Shame, also, is associated with our service in view of the dais (2 Tim.1:8,12,16). The testimony of Paul is not a path to popularity. He exhorts Timothy not to be ashamed of the *testimony* of our Lord, nor of His *prisoner* (1:8). Paul himself was not ashamed, in view of that day (1:12). Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's *chains*, and will find mercy in that day (1: 16). The Christian ministry is generally supposed to be one of the most honorable and dignified of all professions, as far removed from suffering and shame and evil as can be, yet here we have its greatest exponent suffering as if he were a criminal, an enemy of human society, so that he finds it needful to assure us that he is not ashamed of himself and to beg his son in the faith not to be ashamed of him, and to commend a household that stood by him and was not ashamed. How have the times changed!

I have just heard a story that gives us a hint of the average minister's attitude since then. A friend heard many a sermon from a clergyman several years ago, but cannot recall anything he said except, on one occasion, when he was inducting another clergyman into the pastorate of a neighboring church. Then he repeatedly expressed the wish that his colleague would have a good time during his term of office! Alas, how sordid has the spirit of Christendom sunk! A pastor true to Paul today is liable to lose his position and his salary and his reputation. Even in those days many of the saints were ashamed of the greatest and grandest exponent and example of God's glorious grace.

Suffering evil with the evangel is almost unknown. Instead, the "gospel" has often been made the stepping stone to a place of preferment and pelf. Is it not clear that something is amiss? The world has not changed its attitude toward God. Yes, and the saints have not altered their rejection of Paul (2 Tim.1:15). He had gone among them with great success. He had recently written to them of the highest truths ever made known. Would they not cleave to him through thick and thin? Would they not honor him above all men? No! The capstone of grace demands that he suffer shame from the hands of God's saints, the very ones who owed him all!

It takes *power* to suffer evil in God's service. This can come only through faith in His Word, especially in an appreciation of His Godlike dealings with us, entirely apart from our own consciousness or volition. The delicious thought that His grace toward us was exercised before eonian times (2 Tim.1:9) is a tremendous help to lift us out of our own weakness and stand on His strength. The mere fact that, at that time, when we had as yet done nothing amiss that called for it,

His *grace* was given us in Christ Jesus, shows that our sin had as yet done nothing amiss that called for it, His was well known to Him, and was a vital factor in His purpose, for He could show such grace only to those who deserved the opposite. If He reckoned with our sins then, it is evident that He can cope with them now.

Paul himself is our example in this as in all else. He has the highest titles which a servant of Christ can obtain in this era. He has a triple crown, far more magnificent than that of the Roman pontiff today. He was a Herald, an Apostle and a Teacher of the nations. His parish was the world, including every nation on the inhabited earth. In time, his ministry extends through-out this era, for he did not only speak, but made his message immortal by his pen. He was the first to herald the abolition of death and to bring to light life and incorruption. None of the apostles before him had such a message. None had the scope of his, either in space or time. His teaching far transcends that of any other either before or after him. I feel sure that every saint will agree that he deserves the highest honors at the dais of anyone who ever lived.

And what was his earthly reward? Did they build him a vast cathedral, such as was later erected to honor Peter in Rome? Did they seat him on a jeweled throne with a glittering crown upon his head? Did they come to adore and kiss him as they now kiss St. Peter's brazen toe? Far from all this! When our Lord was crucified, his disciples left Him and fled. So also, when Paul was imprisoned, most of his followers forsook him and were ashamed to have anything to do with him. Indeed, he was so cut off from his erstwhile friends that it was hard to find him, even by those who were not ashamed of him (2 Tim.1:17).

Why was Paul suffering these shameful indignities? Because he was God's ambassador to a rebellious world. Because, as the herald and apostle and teacher of the nations he was faithful to the evangel committed to him. Because he made God's purpose known, and the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus through His crucifixion and burial and ascension and glorification. Because he taught the abolition of death and the vivification of all in his evangel. Because this shameful treatment of God's most highly honored and supremely blest of all the servants of Christ is essential as a background for the revelation of His transcendent grace, not only to mankind, but to all His creatures in the celestial spheres as well, not only now, but in the eons that impend.

Paul himself knew this; therefore he insists that he is not ashamed (2 Tim.1:12). However, he was not concerned so much about himself as about the evangel which had been committed to him. What would become of it after he was gone? Timothy, indeed, was left, and a few others, but the great bulk of those whom he had reached seem to have forsaken him. Moreover, there were forces at work which turned the saints from him and his teaching. Phygellus and Hermogenes were but samples of the many in the province of Asia, where he had reached such numbers, and to whom he had sent his grandest epistles. But he was not ashamed, because he knew Whom he had believed, and was persuaded that He is able to guard what was committed to him for that day (2 Tim.1: 12).

Those who spread Paul's teaching must suffer Paul's treatment. The teaching and the treatment are close companions. The more gain you deserve at the dais the more pain you are likely to bear beforehand. Paul's case was not due to his person, but his message. The more you think about it, the stranger it seems that he exhorts his successor to *suffer evil*! How seldom is this note heard today in preparing for the ministry! Is it not because Paul's message is missing? There is no need to act so as to deserve evil because of our faults, or lack of loving consideration. That should never be encouraged. But when we are faithful to Paul's evangel, and the inevitable evil ensues, let us bear it and never shrink from suffering *with* the great herald and apostle and teacher. Rather, let us cherish it as a privilege, the highest honor which this era can confer on the sons of Adam.

## THE SOLDIER, THE ATHLETE, THE FARMER

I am not a literal soldier or athlete or farmer, yet, figuratively, I am all three, in view of the dais of Christ (2 Tim.2:3-7). This group of figures, which applies to all who belong to Christ in this administration, whatever their station or means of livelihood, is not only most helpful in view of that day, but should assist us in understanding the function of figures of speech, for they are mutually exclusive if we apply them without limitations. No one can be similar to a soldier in all respects and at the same time be *altogether* like an athlete and resemble a farmer *in every way*. In each case the concordance is confined to a *single* feature. It includes nothing but the *suffering* of a soldier, the *rules* of the games, and the *firstness* of the farmer in partaking of his fruits.

### SUFFER AS A SOLDIER

Timothy was not exhorted to emulate a soldier in every particular. He was not advised to take physical training to build up his bodily strength and learn how to fight and destroy and kill his enemies. Quite the opposite! But there was one phase of the soldier's life which would enter his experience, and that is *suffering*. We seldom picture an ideal soldier as a sufferer. We paint him as in the prime of youthful strength and vigor, with martial might, as the song says, "marching as to war." If I had any idea that it would be accepted, I would suggest that these words be changed to a more scriptural phrase, "*suffering as in war*." But who would want to sing about that? Alas, the "Christian soldiers" of today do not take their marching orders from Paul, so have little cause to suffer.

Millions upon millions of men living today have learned that Paul was right. The false glamor of war has been replaced in their minds by the realities of its results. What *suffering* has followed in its train! Hitherto there seems to have been little recognition of this aspect in military circles. Bravery and success were rewarded With medals and decorations, As they are now, but today wounds and suffering call for stripes and the purple heart. Whatever may be the outward symbols of combat, the most enduring are engraven on the hearts of those who suffered fatigue and hunger, disease and mutilation, nerve shock and utter spiritual devastation. Such is the picture put before us by Paul. just as some of the soldiers who suffered severely cheerfully faced their fate, so we should accept the suffering which comes to us with Paul with acquiescent fortitude and thankfulness.

Of course, the true servant of Christ, especially if he is a follower of Paul, will never think of misusing the evangel for his own material benefit. Yet there is the tendency in us all to abuse God's gracious gifts. If the prime motive in our hearts is to make an easy living by selling the truth, it may not land us in jail now, but it will seriously affect our reward in that day. It will do little good to preach grace if our acts do not correspond. Devoutness is not capital, and we should not expect to profit by it in a financial way.

In practice, Paul worked at his trade in order to provide for himself and those with him (Acts 20:34). Yet he never was *involved* or entangled by his business, so that it hindered his work. Even in those days the demands of business could involve a man to such an extent that he had no time or strength to give to the ministry to which God called him. At one time I was superintendent of a printing plant with about forty employees. I found this so strenuous that I had no vitality left for the work I loved, so I resigned and demoted myself to a common workman at a lower wage. But I had to suffer for this also, as it was misunderstood by those who did not sympathize with my work in the Scriptures. My fellow craftsmen thought I was mentally unbalanced, yet I felt a great relief. But it was a great blessing to me, as it left me time and strength for my main purpose in life, which was not to make a living, but to discover and publish God's truth.

This figure of a soldier can easily be perverted unless we hold it down to the points mentioned.

Indeed, we are *not* to war with anyone, but to proclaim peace. Literally it conflicts with that of the ambassador. Only in respect to *suffering* and *involvement* does it find any parallel in God's servants today. Neither does it insist on abstinence from any gainful occupation, for this is expressly implied in the next figure, that of a farmer, and such abstinence directly denounced in some cases. Paul worked night and day, with toil and labor, so as not to be burdensome to anyone, and gave himself as a model in this regard.

### COMPETING IN THE GAMES

Another phase of the dais, and the one which causes the most perplexity, is figured by the athlete. Paul had used this figure before, to illustrate the subjection of the physical body. Every athlete must observe training. He dare not pamper the flesh before contending in the games. But this phase is not before us here. Rather he adds one point which is closely in line with our present theme. He races and boxes so as not to be *disqualified*. He must observe the rules of the game. The A.V. rendering "castaway" gives an entirely false turn to the figure. No athlete was ever cast away if he failed to observe the conditions. He is not banished or executed, but *disqualified*. He loses the race even if he is first over the line. He is not acclaimed the winner in a boxing match if he strikes below the belt. So it will be at the dais. There will be much loss on account of lawless competition.

### THE FARMER AND THE FRUIT

The toiling farmer must be the first to partake of the fruits (2 Tim.2:6). Rightly the farmer is entitled to nine-tenths of the fruit (1 Cor.9:7). So it was ordained in connection with the Circumcision. The Levites and priests were supported by the nation. But *Paul refused* to use his rights, because his was a message of *grace*. So now he gives the farmer the priority, but not all the fruit of his labors.

Paul's second epistle to Timothy is concerned with the last days, so applies to us in a very special way, for it is adapted to the conditions under which we live. It is the most perilous period in this administration. The truth is being withstood as never before. Sound teaching is not tolerated and many are turned aside to myths. Disorder is everywhere. Insubjection is rampant and even disguises itself as submission to the Lord. But the trials of the time give us an opportunity to endure suffering and shame, which will win a rich reward at the dais. May we have grace to take advantage of our special privileges, and use them to glorify His Name!

### SUFFERING IN THE LAST DAYS

In some respects it is more difficult to avoid suffering in these last days than in Timothy's time. The Scriptures declare that, in these days, men will be selfish, fond of money, ostentatious, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, malign, without natural affection, implacable, adversaries, uncontrollable, fierce, averse to the good, traitors, rash, conceited, fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God, having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power. Such we are bidden to shun (2 Tim.3:1-5). Is it possible to live amongst such "saints" and not suffer? Thank God, the Scriptures do not say that *all* are to be like this. Nor does each one have all of these traits. Yet it behooves each one of us to be aware of this word, and to watch that we are not even tinged with such sins. But we cannot help suffering from their very presence. Until we become acquainted with them we may not even know that they are included in this list. Some sins, such as selfishness, are so prevalent, that they do not impress us at first.

Few of the saints seem to be aware of the stratagems of the adversary and the pain inflicted by his fiery arrows in case we are not shielded by faith. If they were more alive to the opposition of the world-mights of this darkness (Eph.6:11-17), they would not so readily yield themselves to their designs, and become his tools in opposing those who are standing in the breach for the celestial

truths against which the enemy is arrayed. I once thought that, as soon as the saints realized the place of our work in this spiritual conflict, they would stand with us through thick and thin, and be alert to the stratagems of the adversary to draw them away, or, worse than that, to join his forces, and attack us from the rear. And, indeed, there are many who stand firm with us, facing the foe, and for these we are unutterably grateful. How sad that some have received the spirit of the adversary, and seek to wrestle with us and wound us, tricked by the adversary into opposition, because they fail to see eye to eye with us in non-essential details or on account of personal prejudices.

### ENDURE AND REIGN

Those who endure shall reign with Christ for the *eons* (2 Tim. 2:12). It is a great pity to make this *everlasting*. Eonian *life* will, indeed, never end, because death itself shall be abolished at the consummation. Therefore it is unwise to overstress that the word eon does not denote endlessness in relation to our life in Christ, for it does *involve* it. But *reigning* is a different matter. All will be *vivified* eventually, but by its very nature, all cannot *reign*. Some must be *subject*. Reigning implies submission to intermediaries, and insubordination to God. When the kingdom is handed over to the Father, God cannot be All in all so long as some of His creatures reign over others. All rule, even that of Christ, shall cease when all authority is transferred into the hands of the Father, and political power gives place to paternal authority.

*Endurance now* is the proper preparation for reigning with Christ in the *future*. How different would rule be today if every office holder had to undergo a thorough course of training in patient suffering! A prominent medical specialist in Europe tried to express a similar thought when he said that every physician ought to be thrown out of the window before he should be allowed to practice on a patient. He should know what suffering is, to deal with it sympathetically and successfully. So it is with governing. Only one who has felt the pains and penalties of mortality, and has endured the consequent suffering and shame, is fitted to rule. Only such a one will reign so successfully that ruling will eventually be ruled out.

The reason why all mortal government must be a comparative failure lies in the unnatural conditions under which it operates. It arose from the estrangement of man from the Creator, and is only a temporal brake on his activities until he is in harmony with God again. Nature demands the submission of the lower creation to the *higher* and of man to God, not of man to *man*. All the futile aspirations and bloody battles for freedom arise from this faulty relationship. No mortal, save the rejected Son of God, is sufficiently superior to his fellows, or so free from sin, or so fully in fellowship with God as to the purpose of man's creation, as to provide a perfect rule. Man is given dominion by God to teach him his own incapacity by a vast and varied demonstration, from the deluge to the consummation.

The almost continuous clash between liberty and tyranny is much misunderstood because it is never absolutely one or the other, but always a mixture. Where there is government by man no one can be utterly free. The limits of liberty are not determined by the form of government alone, or even by its administrators, but by conditions and environment. One person, alone in the wilds, far from his fellows, is not under the same restraints as another who lives in the midst of a metropolis. He may shoot a gun in every direction without interference by the political authorities, whereas such a course would be criminal in a crowded place, and he might be executed for murder.

All forms of government are needed in God's great demonstration of human incompetence. Little as we may like some of them, let us recognize God's wisdom even in their faults, and be thankful for the lessons that they teach. The idea that authority resides in all the *people* who are mature, which

the Greeks called the *demos*, has given rise to democracy. Theoretically this is the rule of the populace, but it is really the rule of the *majority*, and the *subjection* of the minority. Because of its impracticability in the case of great masses of men or the largeness of lands, it is usually modified by the choice of representatives who act instead of their constituents, which is better named a republic. Usually, these forms allow the most individual liberty. Yet, like all the others, the administration and the administrators determine the measure of freedom, rather than the written form. Especially in emergencies this may be evaded or ignored.

The kind of control of human over humans which is sanctioned in the Scriptures is that of a *father* over his family. This is to teach us of God's final place in the consummation. In both cases it is based on natural ties, creation and generation. Then there is that of the *husband* over the wife, which is based on the fact that he is her head. This is also used to illustrate Yahweh's relationship to Israel. *Elders* were to have the rule in the communities in Israel and in the ecclesia, due to their maturity and experience. Kings are a temporary interlude, from the deluge to the consummation. Even Christ reigns only in the last two eons. The *superior authorities* of the present are God's ministers, carrying out His intention, but they are artificial and unnatural, so have very limited basic qualifications for their positions.

*Experience with evil*, and *character* are the requisites for reigning. Neither great works nor success, neither great gifts nor the approval of others will prepare us for it. These will also bring a reward of some kind. Even prolonged patience is not enough. It is necessary for a ruler in that day to have stood his ground in faith, not only under the onslaughts of men, but under assault by the fiery arrows of the powers of darkness.

The same kind of a character and experience is needed by the rulers in the messianic kingdom on earth. Our Lord told His disciples: "You are those who have *continued* with Me in My *trials*. And I am covenanting a covenant with you according as My Father covenanted a kingdom to Me, that you may be eating and drinking at My table in My kingdom. And *you will be seated on thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). That part of their preparation which they least enjoyed was the most essential. Many others were with Him at first, but they did not *continue* in *trial*. This disqualified them for any official position in the coming kingdom. So it is with us today. Our failure to endure does not affect our salvation, for that is altogether and directly the result of His sacrifice. But *rule* in the eonian kingdom is only for those who have been tried and who have stood the test.

The fact that physical well-being sometimes seems more desirable than individual freedom of action has led to so-called "socialist" forms of government. In this form, society, or rather, the state, controls much that is usually left to the individual. In the case of overcrowded countries, whose resources need to be carefully conserved, this may be a vast advantage, but only in the hands of a capable and unselfish administration. The fatal defect in this is its antichristian attempt to bring blessing to men apart from Christ, and in independence of God. The goal set is far too low. As our Lord said, "Seek *first His* kingdom and righteousness, and these all shall be added to you" (Matt.6:33). The physical blessings of the earthly kingdom come from submission to and worship of God, not in planned economies or in the use of technology.

Even an ideal form of government, a heavenly utopia, would fail to function as it should in the hands of mortal men. The millennium will be headed by immortals, and the celestial realms by death-defying saints. No man lives long enough to accumulate the necessary wisdom. Even while he lives he is continually harassed by the operation of death in his body, so that he is prone to do evil and sin. The subjects of the best of states are by no means ideal. They form one long funeral procession of decaying flesh. And, not only the ruler's body, but all of his accomplishments, are doomed to sink



down into ruin and corruption.

In the divine chronicles of Israel's kings we are shown what is the vital factor in human government. When the people and the king *submitted themselves to Yahweh Elohim*, then all went well. When they turned against Him, all went ill. The Jews are a living example of this during the succeeding centuries, until this very day. The highest point in the history of their kingdom was reached when Solomon and the people exhausted their energies and wealth in building the house of Yahweh. This did not impair their power or lower their standard of living, but quite the reverse. And so it was in Israel on other occasions. A return to Yahweh involved a revival of prosperity. This is not so evident among the nations today, for God is not judging now, and He demonstrates such matters by means of the people He has chosen to dominate the earth, when they are in fellowship with Him.

A good definition of endure, would be *suffer evil* with *patience* or *fortitude*. In the original it literally means UNDER-REMAIN, or *remain behind*, as when our Lord stayed in Jerusalem after His parents had left to return to Nazareth (Luke 2:43). The meaning *endure* is a faded figure. It is a great pity that the AV alters it to *suffer* in the passage before us, and there only. This spoils the very striking contrast between the evangel of the kingdom and that of Paul. Our Lord told His disciples, "he who *endures* to the consummation, he shall be *saved*" (Matt.10:22). But now salvation does not depend on endurance, so Paul writes to Timothy, "if we are enduring, we shall be *reigning*" (2 Tim.2:12). In one case *salvation* depends on holding out to the end. In the other salvation is not in question, but reward. Endurance is requited with a place of rule.

Government is essentially the restraint of evil *by evil*. Without it evil was rampant before the deluge. After the eonian times, when evil vanishes, government also disappears. Our rule among the celestials will be concerned with evil. The best preparation is an acquaintance with it and patiently coping with it while on earth. That is why *endurance*, is the requisite for rule. We may be patient in our waiting for His coming. That also will have its reward. Those who keep the faith will be paid with the wreath of righteousness. Indeed, it will be the portion of all who love His advent (2 Tim.4:4). But *endurance* finds its field in *affliction* (Rom.12:12). Those who have gone through this school are ready to cope with the evil that still prevails among the celestials and bring it to a conclusion.

Government uses evil to restrain evil. An individual who kills his fellow is a murderer and must himself die. But the executioner who kills him is an official, and does not commit murder when he kills. But the authority to do evil may be much abused, as when one nation wars against another without just cause. This will nearly cease in the millennium, though even then Gog and Magog will attempt to despoil Israel. Even the reign of Christ will use evil, for He will control natural forces, and compel attendance to the worship of God by with-holding the downpour, or, where this is not essential, as in Egypt, with a stroke (Zech.14:17). Let us not imagine that His rule is all sweetness and light. It also is enforced by evil. He sends evil that good may come of it.

The secret of Christ reveals His celestial glory, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named (Eph.1:21). These are various forms of restraint or rule among the celestials. The sovereignties are the highest of all, who delegate some of their rights to authorities. Except for one reference in Jude 6 to the messengers "who kept not their *first estate*" (sovereignty) we never read of these heavenly realms in the Circumcision writings. They come before us only in Paul's epistles. These sovereignties, probably the most mighty of all God's creatures, cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:38). All sovereignty, as well as all authority and power will be abrogated at the consummation (1 Cor. 15:24). We will not reign for eternity. Our rule is limited to the eons. It is eonian. Even at the present time we are serving

as an object lesson to the sovereignties and authorities, making known to them the multifarious wisdom of God (Eph.3:10). And even now we come into contact with these sovereignties and authorities, the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials, who are our real adversaries, although they work through blood and flesh in order to harm us (Eph.6:12).

In Israel, celestial messengers were almost always beneficent, and bore tidings of good. Not so with us. The denizens of the spirit world are our chief adversaries. They doubtless know that some of us are destined to take their place of rule, and this may account, in part, for their antagonism to the saints of the celestial calling.

These mighty spiritual governments seem to occupy the heavenly realms which are promised to us. They are like the Canaanites in the land of promise, who opposed Israel until Joshua led the nation into their allotment. We cannot count on peace with them so long as we are on earth, and have not displaced them among the celestials. Meanwhile, however, we do not merely withstand them and shield ourselves from their fiery arrows, but we are a blessing to them by manifesting God's wisdom now, and by taking over their rule in the future, under the headship of Christ. Just as He will assume the headship of earth's sovereignties and authorities in the day of Yahweh, and install His apostles and faithful followers in the places of rule on earth, so will He do in the heavens also.

In that glorious day we will not need our armor or our shield. We will be invulnerable, with far more power to do evil than the celestial hosts. There can be no doubt that there, as on earth, evil will be used to compel obedience. Even a father uses force to discipline his child for good. How much more a king! These sovereignties and authorities, judging from their present conflict with the saints, will need severe measures to correct their present course, and change it from enmity to peace. Part of this will probably be done, even before our advent, when Michael and his messengers battle with the dragon and its messengers, and they are cast into the earth, and their place was no longer found in heaven (Rv. 12:7).

We can hardly imagine the magnificence of the millennial reign. Prophet after prophet has extolled its varied glories. But it is confined to a minute part of God's creation. Compared with the orbs of space its size is insignificant. Our celestial realm is unutterably greater and its glories grander. It is amazing how much a man will hear and what risks he will take to seize the reigns of even the smallest of earth's governments. No wonder Paul reckons that the *sufferings* of the current era do not deserve the glories about to be revealed for us (Rom.8:18). We should not look upon these trials as a penalty for past sins, or as a punishment of any kind, but rather as a privilege, which may benefit ourselves as well as celestial creatures, and play a small part in God's great plan of blessing to the whole creation. Let us glory in afflictions which produce endurance (Rom.5:3) and put a crown upon our humbled heads.

### **THE FATE OF THOSE WHO DISOWN HIM**

We have already pointed out that endurance is essential for *salvation* in the case of the Circumcision, at the crisis when the kingdom comes. But it is essential for *reigning* for the Uncircumcision in their celestial realm. But what becomes of us if we do not endure, but disown Him? *He also will disown us*. Until I considered this matter carefully in its context, this statement was filled with terror, and I trembled for my salvation. But later, when I came to be established in the great truth that our acts have nothing to do with our deliverance, which depends entirely on His faithfulness to His Word, it dawned upon me that, if we disown Him we forfeit our right to *reign*, not our other blessings.

The very next sentence should keep us from questioning our safety and security: *He is remaining faithful--He cannot disown Himself*. It is *His* work and *His* word that saves, *not ours*. We do not

need to endure or do anything else to be saved. Not even the quantity or quality of our belief or unbelief is vital. If *we* lack sufficient faith to endure, that does not affect our salvation, but our reward. The least spark of confidence in Him is all that is needed to share in the infinite value of His sacrifice. But more is needed to have a part in this glorious universal reign for the eons of the eons. Only the apostles and faithful will reign on earth. Only those who endure suffering for His sake now will rule in the heavens among the celestials.

## **Tribulation and Wrath**

THE WRATH or indignation of God is a vastly different matter from the tribulations inflicted by men. At the time of the end, especially, it is well to distinguish sharply between the day of God's indignation and the great affliction, although they occur at the same time. Because of man's moral delinquencies God's indignation is coming on the sons of stubbornness (Eph. 5:6). It will be especially manifested in the day of His indignation (Rev.6:17; 11:18) and will be especially severe on Israel (Luke 21:23), especially the worshipers of the wild beast (Rev.14:10) and apostate Babylon (Rev.16:19). Indeed they already have had a foretaste of it (1 Thess.2:16).

Perhaps the very earliest change in God's administration, in view of the present grace, consists in rescuing the believers among the nations out of this coming indignation (1 Thess.1:10). The reason given is that "God did not appoint us to indignation, but to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, the One dying for us, that, whether we may be watching or drowsing, we should be living at the same time together with Him" (1 Thess.5:9,10). Romans takes up the thread and we find that, "being now justified in His blood, we shall be saved from indignation through Him" (5:9). Of one thing we may be sure, that God will never be angry with us, or visit us with the lightning and thunder of His indignation. When His wrath is poured out upon the earth we will not be here to endure it.

This, indeed, is the burden of the Thessalonian epistles. The time of indignation is the dawning of the day of the Lord, and must precede the coming of the kingdom. So long as the kingdom was being heralded it was due at any time. The Thessalonians were suffering severe afflictions and persecutions (2 Thess.1:4). This they mistook for the divine indignation, and thought themselves already in the day of the Lord (2 Thess.2:2). But this cannot be because of the previous presence of our Lord (2 Thess.2:1), and because God had preferred them from the beginning for salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). They suffered from a delusion which has since misled many a saint, that it, that affliction is an evidence of God's anger, and that if we are pleasing God, everything will be pleasant and agreeable.

Later God's pacific attitude was further developed into the great truth of the conciliation, so that, until God alters His mode of administration, in the next economy, even unbelievers are not subject to His indignation. The dispensation of the conciliation is based on the great truth that God, in Christ, was conciliating the world to Himself, and is not reckoning their *offenses* to them (2 Cor.5:19). So that, so long as there is no change in dispensation, from conciliation to indignation, the whole world is immune from the divine displeasure. Salvation from the *coming* wrath, however, is only for those who, like the Thessalonians, are snatched away to meet the Lord at His presence (1 Thess.4:17).

### **TRIBULATION, OR AFFLICTION**

The great difference between affliction and indignation is apparent from the fact that the former comes from men, the latter from God, and thus we are promised affliction while we are preserved from indignation. Affliction is especially for the saints. We glory in afflictions (Rom.5:3) though we dread God's indignation. We are to endure affliction (Rom.12:12) but be delivered from indignation. The Thessalonians received the word in much affliction, but they were not suffering from God's

indignation. The Unveiling reveals God's indignation on Israel and the nations, but it also discloses the fact that John (Rev.1:9), the saints in Smyrna (2:9-10) and the vast white-robed throng (7:14) suffered affliction at the hands of His enemies.

Man's day, mortal misrule, does not cease of itself when the ecclesia is caught away. It does not voluntarily hand over the government of the earth to Messiah. on the contrary, it reaches the summit of its development in the day of Jehovah, just before His advent, in the man of sin, the false Christ. No man has ever been elevated to the height which he will attain. The indignation of God is turned against mankind and its head at the very commencement of Jehovah's day. The great object of God's dealings with His creatures is to humble them and make them subject to Himself. This He does by means of evil. When man rises in rebellion against Him at the time of the end, He uses the same medicine, but in much stronger doses. He gives vent to His indignation by turning the powers of nature, the pride of man, and the spirit world against humanity, so that the earth is swept clear of rebellion and Christ assumes the throne. This is the divine side of that era. For a brief period, as at the deluge, He allows His fury free play.

### THE GREAT AFFLICTION

The so-called "great tribulation," or great affliction, presents a widely different line of thought, and ought to be associated with man's day rather than with the day of Jehovah. It speaks of the distress brought upon Israel by men. The nations have persecuted His ancient people during most of man's day, and they are doing so still. But the greatest of all pogroms will come when Jehovah's day has got under way. Then faithful Jews will refuse to worship the symbol of man's rule, and suffer from his hands. The unfaithful part of the nation, however, along with the other nations, will suffer from *God's indignation*, which must not be confused with the great affliction of faithful Israelites from their fellow men. This time of trouble will be the climax of Jewish persecution, the last that will be allowed. It is the climax of man's day rather than the commencement of Jehovah's, though it is *in* both. It belongs to the darkness of the night rather than to the light of the morning. Christ does not *direct* this affliction, but *avenges* it. Although it takes place in the commencement of the Lord's day, it is a holdover from man's day. For the *saints* the day of the *Lord* is characterized by blessing and glory, not by affliction.

The greatest of all afflictions, however, comes exclusively to Israel, in the midst of the seventieth heptad, at the time of the end. On the mount of Olives our Lord foretold this time. They will be hated by all of the nations. Many will be in the land. The abomination of desolation will be set up in the holy place. Then those in Judea are warned to flee into the mountains, for then shall be great affliction, such as has not occurred before, neither ever may be recurring. Immediately after the affliction the Son of Mankind will come (Matt.24:4-31). It will also extend to all nations, for the vast white-robed throng which comes out of this tribulation was in all nations and tribes and peoples and languages. The rewards they receive are those which belong to the earth and Israel (Rev.7:14-17).

To differentiate between the *indignation* of *God* against *mankind* and the great "tribulation" or *affliction* of the *saints* at the hands of *men* is so vital that we will repeat the principal contrasts. The indignation *introduces* the *day of the Lord* and is the *opposite* of the conciliation which characterizes this administration of grace. The *great* affliction is only a *continuation* of the afflictions of the *saints*, which have been present throughout *man's day*, but is the worst of all because this day reaches its climax, and is reaching its *end*. It does not commence until the man of sin is unveiled. If we relate the indignation to the Lord's day, and the great affliction to man's day, that will help much to clarify our conception of that era, the greatest crisis in human history.

The book of the Revelation (1:10) begins with the announcement that John is in the Lord's day. All subsequent action in it corresponds with this fact. Christ, as Prophet, takes His place among the Israelitish ecclesias and judges them. As the Lambkin in the Throne section He breaks the seals and sends the messengers of doom. In the Temple section He directs the pouring out of the bowls of God's fury. God's indignation is everywhere, until the kingdom comes. The great affliction, however, is confined to the fifth seal. It occupies only the latter half of the seven years.

The structure, or framework, of Revelation seems to be quite symmetrical, and is pivoted between the day of Jehovah and the day of God. In both, Christ is seen in His three characters as Prophet, Potentate and Priest. But it does not seem to include any other time. It is quite remarkable that nothing is said of the consummation, after the day of God. If there were, we might expect to find a period before the day of the Lord, to correspond. Even as the messages to the ecclesias at the end (Rev.22:6-17) are in the day of God, so the messages to the seven ecclesias in the beginning must be in the Lord's day, as, indeed, we read that they are (Rev.1:10). John was told to write what he himself observed in that day. But the *advent* day comes before us several times. After the seals and the trumpets and the thunders are past, then the world kingdom becomes our Lord's and His Christ's (Rev.11:15). After the outpouring of the seven bowls and the destruction of Babylon, then again we read that the Lord reigns, and He comes on His white horse and takes His place as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev.19:7,11,16). The advent day is the crowning event in the day of Jehovah.

There was a time when the question was much discussed, "Will the church go through the great tribulation?" But in those days the light was still dim. We did not see clearly who it was that went into the great tribulation, and we were even less clear as to who came out of it. In fact it was generally taken for granted that the "great multitude" must belong to the nations (as it came out of them) if not to the "Church." Now we know that the Lord was speaking to His disciples of the Circumcision, and it applies only to them. And this is confirmed by the throng which comes out. They also belong to the Circumcision, not to us. The action takes place, not in the administration of grace, but in the next economy of indignation, hence cannot include those who belong to this present secret administration.

So long as the world is at enmity with God, and the saints are not vivified, there will be affliction for those who are His. God uses it in producing endurance, and testedness, and expectation (Rom.5:3,4). The greatest affliction comes as might be expected, when the triumph of godlessness has reached its height under the man of lawlessness. At that time, however, God's indignation will also be poured out. On this account we will be spared that experience. The nation which will enjoy the heights of earthly bliss in the last two eons, will be called upon to go through the deepest affliction of earth's history in the brief period before the kingdom comes. They enter this tribulation and they emerge. Thank God, it is not for us!

## **The Judgments of the Nations**

NATIONS have a destiny as well as individuals. Israel is an eonian nation (2 Sam.7:24). Other nations will endure eonian chastening, or receive eonian life, according to their treatment of our Lord's brethren (Matt.25:46). We miss much if we confound nations with individuals, and confuse the time of their judgment and reward with that of the persons who compose them. The fact that Israel *as a nation* is to live and rule until the consummation does not by any means imply that every individual in it possesses eonian life, and will share in the kingdom when it comes. Far from it. Only those who did in *faith* will receive their allotment in the kingdom at the resurrection of the just. The nation to which we belong may have a place in that kingdom, but the saints of this day will enjoy a far higher destiny.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the fortunes of many nations are discussed, as they came into contact with Israel, and were used by Jehovah to discipline or to support His people. Their treatment of Israel had a marked influence on their welfare even in the past, when the chosen nation was often weak and insignificant. It should not be difficult to see that the same principle will operate in the era of its supremacy. Even now, when a nation establishes itself after a severe conflict, its attitude toward other nations is determined largely by their conduct during its period of trial. When Israel takes its place as the ruling nation of the earth, the other nations will each be accorded a place corresponding to their attitude toward its scattered units during their long period of affliction.

All *nations* come into contact with the Jews, but by no means all *individuals*. The sons of Israel are scattered in practically every nation on earth already, and certainly will be in that day, because they will come out of every realm when the kingdom is set up. All governments will be called upon to deal with them, as to their political status and their economic position.

There are many other parables in the Scriptures which deal with the individuals, such as the harvest, the dandelion, the fishing, etc. But these are not specifically referred to *nations*. Individuals in Israel will also be judged at the commencement of the kingdom. It requires *faith* to accept the word *nations* here. Much more faith is required than from those for whom Matthew is especially written. Jews are very keen when the word *goyim* occurs, for they would like to apply all the judgments to others, and all the blessings to themselves, just as we are in the habit of doing. Let us not confuse this parable with all the rest. The key hangs at the door. If we do not use it the parable will not yield its treasures.

The mere fact that this parable occurs in *Matthew* should settle the matter, for this account is devoted especially to the King, and contains the kingdom charter. Here Christ quotes Isaiah (42:1-3) to the effect that *judging* shall He be reporting to the *nations* (Matt.12:18). Isaiah goes right on to say that He shall continue until He shall place *judgment* in the earth, and for His law the [7]*nations*[0] shall wait. In this Matthew differs from the other accounts, for in them our Lord appears in different characters. The Servant of Mark, the Man of Luke, and the divine Son of John dealt with individuals, as a rule. Such discrepancies as the grounds for divorce (unfaithfulness in Matthew and none in the others) can only be explained that He is dealing with the unfaithful *nation* (which Jehovah divorced) in Matthew, and with His own disciples, as individuals, elsewhere. We should never adulterate any of the accounts of our Lord's life with statements or thoughts taken from another, nor supplement one from a different one, for their very omissions are more vital than our additions. They do *not*

present the same *character*, even though they deal with the same Person.

Matthew is the *kingdom* account. It is intensely *national*. In it Christ forbade His apostles even to go on a road of the *nations* (10:5). The testimony is not merely to men, but to *governors* and *kings* and the *nations* (10:18). At the time of the end *nation* shall rise against *nation* (24:7), and they will be hated by *all* of the *nations*. The evangel of the *kingdom* shall be heralded in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the *nations* (24:14). Therefore there is also a judgment at the inauguration of the kingdom, not of individuals, but of *nations*, as such, under the figure of sheep and kids. It is further illustrated by personifying the nations, comparing them to individuals. This has generally been taken literally, and so has led to much confusion, and to the idea that this is the "general judgment," in which those who do well receive eternal life, and others everlasting punishment (Matt.25:31-46).

It is strange that the utter incongruity of making this passage mean persons has not long since been recognized. This is undoubtedly due to the general ignorance as to figures of speech. We should have been warned by the opening words; which are as clear as they are concise. All *nations* (as such) are before us. But our minds fail to apprehend its full significance. We are not accustomed to taking God's Word precisely as it stands. Perhaps here it is somewhat difficult to distinguish between those *of* the nations, and the nations themselves. Still the fact that the passage is found at the end of Matthew, the national account, should have prepared us for a judgment in line with its message, in which the nations, as such, receive their deserts for the eons, when the kingdom is established.

The account as a whole is a *parable*, in which a shepherd's dealings with his sheep and kids are compared with the King's dealings with the nations. Each sheep or kid represents one nation, the former those favorable to Israel and the latter those who did not treat them well. Within the parable are several other figures. First the *severing* is *as* that of a shepherd, a plain *simile*. Then, by the figure of *personification*, or *impersonation*, the animals, or the nations, are transformed into human beings. Each one of the sheep at His right hand is given a *kingdom* made ready for them from the disruption. If each gentile who treats the Jews well gets a kingdom all for himself, he is better off in the kingdom than the Jew! Besides, then there is no figure, no parable. Why bring in the sheep and the kids at all? If each individual of that day will deal with the Lord's brethren as here recorded, and will be literally rewarded with a kingdom the whole picture is unnecessary and obscures the point. All this is only a graphic illustration of our Lord's dealings with the *nations*, not the individuals.

The nations in the kingdom, during the millennium and in the new earth, will be allotted a place corresponding to their previous political treatment of Israel. Some will receive special blessings because they were kind to them. Others will be most severely disciplined because they had made no efforts to alleviate their lot. "These shall be coming away into chastening eonian, yet the just into life eonian." Such is the only possible import of these much-abused words, when they are kept connected with their context, and viewed within the scope of the account which contains them. Matthew continues and completes the *kingdom* testimony of the prophets, and is in perfect agreement with it. As Son of Mankind our Lord will adjudicate among the nations. All the debts of Israel must be paid. All wrong must be recompensed. It will not be revenge, such as the unregenerate Jew would like to have, but righteousness, leading to the subjection of all to God at the consummation.

What is indicated by the eonian fire for the nations who do not succor the Lord's brethren in their distress may be apprehended best by considering the sufferings of the chosen nation themselves at the present time, before our very eyes, for this also is characterized as *torment in a flame*. It is Israel *nationally* and *politically* that is dead, not the individuals of the nation, and this is brought before us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. As a *nation* Israel is tormented by the *nations*. Altogether



apart from their *personal* worth or unworthiness, good and bad, high and low, rich and poor, the nation, as such, has been generally subject to discriminatory legislation by the governments of the earth, especially in the middle ages.

Antisemitism is called a "flame" in the Scriptures. Is it not most appropriate to characterize its judgment as "fire?" *In this flame* the chosen nation suffers as it once did in Egypt. But *it is not burned up*. Notwithstanding its painful lot, its numbers have *increased*. And such is quite possible in the kingdom, for at its end Satan mobilizes a tremendous host that threatens to destroy the capital. This revolt could easily be accounted for if these nations, at a distance from Jerusalem, had been reduced to political slavery, and forced to submit by the iron rule. Otherwise why should they object to the fullness of physical blessing with which the earth will be filled at that time? Satan wishes to *rule*. His aim is political. He deceives the *nations*. It is a national uprising.

The unbeliever is usually allowed to monopolize the fire of the future. For them we reserve the flaming judgments of Jehovah's day, the unextinguished fires of Hinnom's vale, and the fiery lake which is the second death. But the believer also has his testing time, not indeed to determine his fate but his reward. No one, perhaps, thinks of literal fire in this connection, for our works are not, as a rule, such as can be tested by actual flames. Yet the figure of fire is there, and we may as well prepare ourselves for a most searching investigation of the character of our deeds. Much of our service, we fear, will feed the flames and disappear.

The failure to see the *corporate* character of the fate of the rich man may easily lead to an entirely false conception of God's dealings with the individual. According to that the principle of compensation, which does obtain in national affairs, is applied to each one, and he who gets good in this life is fated to fare ill in hades, and he who has evil in this life is sure of blessings in the beyond. The good sense of expositors has kept them from pressing this part of the parable, for it would soon show how untenable the personal application is. Applied to Israel nationally, with Lazarus as the faithful remnant, who take comfort in the bosom of *faith*, all is in place and appropriate.

An equally impossible pass is reached if we take the judgment of the nations as that of individuals. How many who have quoted the last verse of the chapter in preaching the gospel have made it clear to themselves or to their audience that "these" who "go away into everlasting punishment" (AV), do so, *not* because they are *sinners*, but *because they did not succor Christ's brethren according to the flesh?* And how many set forth the only road to eonian life as the context demands? There is no repentance here, no faith in God, not even good *works*, except those done to suffering Israel. We may be sure that Paul would not tolerate such an evangel for this administration for a moment. Now it is *not* of works, but by *grace* through *faith* in God's word concerning Christ and His *sacrifice*. Physical relationship, which is paramount here, is entirely ruled out (2 Cor.5:16).

It is very little relief to shift this strange evangel (which is no evangel at all) to the time of the end, immediately before the Son of Man comes. No doubt this will be the crucial period and will usually correspond to what has gone before, but there is no limitation in the passage. It would be most unjust to punish a nation for their attitude in this short period *alone* if their previous history had been favorable. Indeed, at that time, *all* nations will hate those of them who are disciples of Christ (Matt.24:9). The time is not limited, and justice demands that the whole history of a nation be taken into account, just as in individual judgment, all the acts of each come under review, not only those in the hours of death.

What sort of an evangel have we here, that promises eonian life to the individuals who succor the Lord's brethren, and eonian chastening to those who do not! It is an evangel of works, pure and

simple, done accidentally, as it were, by those who realize nothing of the gravity or significance of their acts. Now we know that Israel is scattered among *all nations*, so all governments will make contact with them. But will all individuals even find an opportunity to show their benevolence? Perhaps one in a thousand of earth's inhabitants belongs to this favored race. They live in large groups. How little opportunity there would be for most people to avail themselves of the means of obtaining eonian life, even if it seems so simple to perform the necessary duties!

But that which should make us hesitate is the fact that these works are done without faith in God, and in utter ignorance of His Christ, and without the aid of His sacrifice, without the least reference to His precious blood. Life apart from the death of Christ, and for the eons, sounds suspicious to everyone who knows the value of His work. We read that, apart from faith, it is impossible to be well pleasing to God (Heb.11:6). Even these brethren of His, who are succored, have no title to eonian life unless they believe. Yet, according to this evangel, one who feeds a Jew, whether he is a believer or not, thereby earns eonian life! Were it applied today (and why not?), and were properly advertised, what a good time these persecuted people would have!

None of Israel will get into the kingdom on any such terms. Peter makes this very clear. Jesus Christ is the only one Who can save them. "There is no salvation in any other, for neither has any other name been given under heaven among men in which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Many a gentile today has fulfilled the conditions here laid down, but I am sure that he will not receive eonian life as his wages, for now God's righteousness comes to him who is *not* working but believing (Rom.4:4). This evangel of succoring Israel cannot operate today, yet we have no right to shut it out. Nationally, it no doubt has its place, but individually it is impossible.

Essentially, this evangel is the converse of the true. In it those who are awarded eonian life are not sinners needing a Saviour, but philanthropists benefitting Christ Himself! All we need to do is to widen the scope of Christ's "brethren" to all mankind and it would make a bloodless and beautiful evangel, well adapted to the pride and unbelief of the modern man.

One of the greatest advances in truth in modern times was the placing of this passage in its proper time, at the beginning of the reign of Christ, and limiting its scope to the living, thus rescuing it from the "general judgment," with which it is so often confounded. Now we propose another advance, limiting it still further to the *nations* (as such) at that time, according to its own declaration. We have already insisted on this at various times, but further study has clarified the details and led to the entire rejection of the thought that it might be applicable to individuals at the time of the end, who succor Israel in their time of trouble. It cannot have a personal application.

This leads to the interesting conclusion that *nations* may have eonian life, or may be subjected to eonian chastening. That there will be nations in the thousand years and in the new earth is abundantly clear from the various references to them in the Unveiling. It is the essence of Christ's reign that He shall have authority over the nations and that He shall share this with the overcomers in Israel (Rev.2:26; 12:5). Even in the last eon, when priesthood is no more, the glory and honor of the nations will be carried into the holy city, new Jerusalem (Rev.21:26). As they will not war among themselves and will be under the iron club of the great King, there is no reason why the nations which exist when the kingdom is set up should not continue throughout its course, and thus have eonian life or chastening until the consummation.

The iron club is a feature of the millennium which we are prone to forget. The entrancing visions of peace and plenty, especially for the redeemed in Israel, captivate our minds and keep us from considering other aspects of that day. The revolt at its close comes as a shock to most of us the first

time we seriously consider it, because we imagine that the conditions in Israel are common to all the peoples of the earth. In the sphere of government there is a great contrast, for all other nations become dependent vassals of the chosen people. They will be *forced* to obey the mandates of Jerusalem. Even Egypt, which, with Assyria and Israel, will be a blessing in the earth (Isa.19:25), if she should not send up her quota to worship in Jerusalem will be stricken in a special way besides getting no rain. And downpour will be withheld if any other of those who are left of the nations should fail to send their representatives (Zech.14:17).

There will be no self-determination then, no independence, no empire with self-governing members. The kingdom is God's means of *subjecting* all to Himself, not of making His creatures independent of His power. It will be an unlimited despotism with Israel as the ruling nation. Not only Christ will exercise absolute power at its head, but He will delegate Israelites to rule over the other nations. They will shepherd them with an iron club, *as vessels of pottery are being crushed* (Rev.2:27). Is not this quite the equivalent of eonian chastening and fire? A government that has the forces of nature at its command does not need to use such crude weapons as our most modern implements of warfare. It will be much more effective to command the clouds to keep away. And at the last grand revolt no army is needed to oppose the horde led on by Satan. Fire simply descends and devours them.

Satan has succeeded in deceiving the *nations* hitherto (Rev.20:3). This does not signify that he has deceived every individual. It refers to the political divisions of the earth. He has mislead the governments because he aspires to rule. As, in the kingdom, Christ is determined to rule, Satan is bound in the abyss. When he is loosed he does not seek to deceive the nations near Jerusalem. Evidently they have come to a knowledge of Jehovah such as makes deception impracticable. So he goes to the four corners, those furthest from the center, where he finds a ready response. Is it not likely that these are the ones who have been crushed by the iron club, whose chastening is most severe, who have felt the fire of Jehovah's indignation on account of their treatment of Israel during the era of the nations? Would such not tend to drift away from the center of government and be found as far as possible from the city of the great King?

At the same time would not the revolt at the end of the thousand years serve to solve another problem in connection with individual judgment, which follows immediately thereafter? In that eon salvation will be a very different matter from the present. All Israel will be saved (Rom.11:26). If there should be a small remnant within it, they will be the unsaved, not the saved, as in the past. These will die. Nationally it will be the first really "Christian" nation. And the evangel of that day will be based on the *authority* of Christ over all the earth, and *nations*, as such, will be disciplined and baptized (Matt.28:18-20). As the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah (Isa.11:9), it may be that all the unsaved join the last revolt and die in the fire that descends from heaven and so find themselves among the dead who stand before the great white throne. In this way none but the saved enter the new creation, and all others are judged in the last great judgment, which deals with the acts of each individual.

The judgment of the nations as set forth by our Lord in Matthew has long been recognized as such, especially in contrast to the judgment of the individual at the great white throne. But there have been details which were not satisfactory. Gradually the light has been increasing. The final flash which illuminated the whole to full satisfaction came through the study of figures of speech. The literal interpretation grew more and more untenable. Once it became apparent that the *nations* are intended, not only by the sheep and the kids, but also by those who take part in the judgment, and not individuals, all of the difficulties vanished except that of making it clear to others.

Those who have grown up with the thought that this passage is the general judgment and gives us the

destiny of the two classes into which all mankind is divided--the wicked and the just--have evidently never taken the context to heart, for only a small fraction of them have ever visited anyone in jail, or base their hopes upon the giving of food, drink or clothing. Most of my readers will know how utterly contrary this is to the true evangel of God's grace. We therefore urge them with all kindness to *consider the context*. See how impossible it is to base eonian life on the action here spoken of. It is in conflict with the kingdom evangel, which demands repentance. It militates against the evangel for today, which excludes works. It is diametrical opposed to God's dealings with His creatures to give eonian life to anyone apart from Christ and His sacrifice.

Those who have already recognized that this judgment is not concerned with sinners as a whole, or with the general conduct of mankind, but is based only on contacts with the Lord's brethren, will find that this gives only partial relief. Even if this is confined to the time of the end, for which there is no adequate evidence, there still remains the impossibility of setting the eonian destiny of anyone on such grounds.

There was a time when I limited the action here to the time of the end. Destiny in the kingdom for each *nation*, it seemed to me, depended upon their attitude to Israel *at that time*. But this has its difficulties. The *judgment* is at that time, indeed, but the action is not thus limited. It seems better to include the whole "times of the gentiles" or eras of the nations, for at the time of the end the nations are angered, without exception (Rev. 11:18) and *all* of them are in the toils of Babylon (Rev.14:8), and *all nations* will hate the disciples of Christ (Matt.24:9). There would be few sheep to stand at His right hand in that case. It seems far more just to deal with the nations according to *all* of their contacts with Israel, for this has varied greatly from time to time.

Now, however, that I see in this judgment the complete squaring of accounts between the nations and Israel, introductory to the setting up of the kingdom, all seems supremely satisfactory. This is just what we should expect at the end of Matthew's account. It agrees with all the facts, for the Lord's brethren have been scattered among all nations and had been *politically* in distress most of the time, even when they managed to gain a good livelihood or amass wealth. And when the Son of Mankind sits on the *throne* of His glory, with *nations* before Him, what else can it be but the long delayed adjudication between Israel and the nations? Each must be assigned its place according to some standard, and the one given here is in full accord with the righteousness on which the kingdom is founded.

## **The Function of the Great White Throne**

THE LINK between the here and the hereafter, for the unbeliever, is forged at the great white throne. It is the only conscious experience through which he passes from the present life to the consummation, when God will be All, not only in the saints, but in all of Adam's race. The mature unbeliever leaves this life unsaved, unjust, mortal, and at enmity with God. *Having passed through the judging*, his next conscious moment will find him saved (1 Tim.4:10), justified (Rom.5:18), vivified (1 Cor.5: 22), and reconciled to God (Col.1:20). I do not like the word "conversion because it seems entirely inadequate to describe the change in the believer. It would be far more apt if used of the change in the unbeliever, effected at the great white throne. Nothing can happen there which would interfere with the great object to which it is devoted, that of preparing the dead who are *out* of Christ for a place *in* Him, by *sight*, instead of by *faith*.

We must make a revolutionary revision of our entire outlook in regard to the future lot of the unbeliever. What is needed is a God's-eye view in place of man's. The judgment is *not* merely a futile attempt to deal out punishment to those who have already suffered and who will be tormented endlessly, without any regard to God's purpose in creation or the effect on His great name. It is His means of manifesting to men their utter failure to give Him His due. It will convince them that His sentence, condemning every son of Adam (Rom.5:18), is just and true. But it will also reveal His righteousness in Christ, Who will be their Judge, by means of which all can and will be justified, and thus the solid ground laid down for their reconciliation at the consummation.

The substitution of eternal torture for universal reconciliation has utterly distorted every aspect of the great white throne judging. This diabolical doctrine changes the motive of judgment from love to hate. Instead of a marvelous display of God's ability to help His creatures, it is debased to a vicious exhibition of His power to harm. Tremendous might is exercised in order to raise the dead, with no other reason than to associate their dire doom with Christ and His God. Few of them had ever seen Him. Most of them had never heard of Him. Now they are to exist forever in unutterable, unending torture, as a result of their meeting with the Saviour of the world! Would they not curse Him in their hearts throughout that long eternity of woe? What motive can there be for connecting a *Saviour* with such dire punishment? Is He there to mock them, to intensify their despair, to multiply their misery? If the uniform penalty of all who stand before the great white throne is eternal torment, then Satan, not Christ, should preside. The adversary, not the Saviour, should sit as judge.

The purpose of God absolutely requires that those who stand before the great white throne not only endure, but accept and acquiesce in whatever evil befalls them. More than that, since it is to lead to reconciliation with God, they must not merely acknowledge the justice of all that occurs, but must feel the positive goodness and affection that prompts even the severest infliction. Friends are not made by justice alone, but by the heart that underlies it. Then God will not let men guess at His goodness, as He does today. He will not hide his heart from them as He does now. All the secrets of mankind as well as the hidden motives of God will be revealed. Whoever realizes what God is about, must approve of it, no matter at what cost to themselves, for the goal is so good and glorious, that it is worth any amount of temporary affliction and distress.

The curtain that today conceals what man is and what he does will be drawn aside at the great white

throne. This alone will condemn all mankind without further evidence. At the same time the covering which hid God from His creatures will be taken away. He will be seen in the Son of Mankind and His sympathetic acts. He will be revealed in the Son of God and His loving dealings. Not only the severity of God's justice and holiness will be endured, but its motive and object will be open for all to see, so that there will be none of the bitterness and rebellion and hate which springs from His unseen providence today. Those who need it will suffer, not as now, without any inkling of its benefits, but with a realization of their need of it, and of the end in view.

The idea that the account of each one will be balanced, so that every evil will be exactly compensated by good and every good by bad, is altogether contrary to God's purpose. Nothing but a neutral insipid stalemate would result from this, with neither God nor man any the better for all the travail of the eons. Evil is not simply to be replaced by good, but to be *overcome* by it. Evil will bring a tremendous harvest of good when the proper season has arrived.

What is the object God has in view by the apparent chaos of injustice in the world today? Is it not to demonstrate to men that He alone is the Disposer? If there is to be justice it must come from Him alone, not from fellow men, or any other source. As a whole, men will never get their deserts, and the harm done to them will never be avenged, unless the Deity steps in and does it for them. Men strive valiantly to establish justice. Their governments and courts, their laws and enforcement officers are all devoted to this end. But how futile are their efforts to rid the world of wrong! It is evident from their laws that they have lost sight of the divine Disposer, and are themselves unjust in their repudiation of *His* claims. This is what entails the retribution of injustice in dealing with the relation of man to man. Human laws differ from those given by God. He gave His once for all. Men have been making them for millenniums, and are making more today than ever, for they revolve about the creature instead of having a stable center in the Creator. At the great white throne man will recognize his own inability to make things right. This will lead him back to God and His just judgment.

The general notion that judgment is automatic, so that, even in this life, everyone gets his due; that good is rewarded and evil punished, not only by the laws of the land, but by the decrees of nature, is not confirmed by experience. Were it so, there would be no need of a judging in the future, and all would be prepared, at death, by reconciliation with God, to know Him as their All. One of the most perplexing problems of human history is the buffeting of fate, which brings one man more than his rightful share of good and another an undue amount of misery. In this life there is only a measure of reward and retribution. Few get their due deserts of either good or bad. In fact the most meritorious deeds, which involves loyalty to God and His Word, may bring the most suffering. It is evident that it is not God's intention that all should be set right before men die. If men were really logical, they would see the absolute necessity of a judgment to come, and not try to even up their scores in their present career.

Take the saints, for example. Now evil has the upper hand. Those who will live godly suffer persecution. The better they are the heavier are their afflictions. Yet these are light afflictions in view of the great weight of glory which they will produce. In this life our evil and good are not balanced, even though we have many spiritual compensations, and may, like Paul, delight in infirmities, in outrages, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake (2 Cor.12:10). In fact, for the present, it seems that the measure of success and reward in this era depends upon the repudiation of God and His Word, and even on opposition to His truth and those who seek to herald it.

The great white throne judging is not only necessary as the complement of man's experience in this life, but most desirable, because it will accomplish, for our relatives and acquaintances, the very

thing which we would do for them now, if we possessed the power. At present, *faith* would turn them from enemies to friends of God. Then this will be accomplished by *sight*. Who, among the saints, has not wished that he could *compel* his associates to believe? If only some great miracle, some overwhelming event would show them the hand of God! In other words, we have more confidence in sight than in faith to bring the sinner to God. In fact, the saints are continually drifting in that direction. They try to produce evidence that will convince the unbeliever. That is just what God will do at the great white throne. All will be convinced by overwhelming evidence which they cannot resist. But this is not God's way today. Now faith must rest upon His bare word, without evidence.

Practically, the lot of the unbeliever does not include the first or second death, for these are not a part of his conscious experience. As a result, we should not look at the judging of the unsaved as a far-off, future event, but one which comes to him immediately after dying. So, also, we should not consider the reconciliation as taking place thousands of years after the judging (which, indeed, it may), but as the immediate result of it. The judging is the prelude to everlasting life, not eternal damnation, in the experience of the unbeliever. It is the transition between this life and eternal bliss, not everlasting woe.

Eternal torment makes the judging futile and foolish. Universal reconciliation makes it fruitful and wise. What profit is it to God to torture His creatures endlessly, when, if He is a deity of limitless power and infinite wisdom, He could save them and get from them the fruit of His labors, and enjoy the worship and adoration for which He created them? What would we think of a God Who would create billions of creatures to curse Him endlessly? No man would exert such power in order to turn his handiwork against him, unless he were demented. Why charge God with this insanity?

### **WHITE, NOT BLACK**

The color of the judgment throne depends upon the outcome of the judging. Eternal torment demands that it be black. Reconciliation calls for *white*. The lives of most men are drab with toil and trouble, disease and death. If this is to be followed by an eternity of agony, surely no hue but the deepest ebony could possibly be used to accord with the tragedies to be enacted there. It alone could properly depict the hopeless and horrible fate to which everyone who stands before it is condemned. But *white* is the color of light and righteousness and holiness. Our Lord's garments became white on the mount of transfiguration (Matt.17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29). The messengers, commonly called "angels" are clothed in white (Matt.28:3; John 20:12; Acts 1: 10). Worthy saints are robed in white (Rev.3:4,5; 7:9,13; 19:14). They whiten their garments in the blood of the Lambkin (Rev.7: 14). Black is the symbol of darkness and death.

The *present* is a time of blackness and darkness. Men love the darkness because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). Even we were once darkness (Eph.5:5). The era is actually called "darkness" because that is its chief characteristic (Eph.6:12). There is no great white throne today. There is no divine standard of righteousness. As in a blackout, men grope their way about. They commit their shameful deeds in secret, unseen by their fellows. If there were such a white tribunal on earth, it would put an end to all this. No one would be able to hide. All would be open. Even our departure from God, our failure to give Him His right place in our lives, would be painfully exposed. On the other hand, is not this just what we sigh for when appalled by the prevailing wickedness? We are right, there should be light thrown into this darkness. Everything should be exposed and set right. That is what reformers aim to do. *It will be done*, but not now. That is the function of the great white throne.

But it will not be a mere reformation in which wickedness is punished and good rewarded. *All* will

be condemned because they are not merely compared with their fellows, but with the glory of God, where *all* fall short. Not only will all be found guilty, but *all* will be set right, not only with their human associates, but with God, to whom they owe infinitely more than to their neighbors. This is the fatal lack in all other reformations. They do not go to the root of the matter, which is the recognition of God and the wrongs done to *Him*. Can we imagine such a thing today, which would bring all evils to light, especially that root of all wrongs, the neglect of God, and assign to each his appropriate penalty, so that *all* would be saved and justified and reconciled? Only the Judge that God has appointed could do that, and He will not do it until the proper time. Yet it may help us to understand and sympathize with that future judging, if we transfer it to the present. All good people would approve of it. So should we welcome the great white throne.

We *must* consider all things from God's viewpoint if we wish the absolute truth. His glory and honor should be our chief concern. For the ordinary saints this is difficult to do, because they see only a small segment of His operations, and this usually gives a false impression. It is only when we see the whole of God's purpose, the place of the eons in it, and the consummation, that we are able to fully understand any section of it. We must judge all from the end, the outcome, not from any part of the process. In order to reveal His heart, God may suffer the loss of His whole creation in the process, without being dishonored or disgraced, *provided that all are saved at the end*. If God, in His efforts to make Himself known, should lose all of His creatures, nothing could possibly remove the stigma of His defeat. Even if He should lose only a considerable part, the glory of His Godhood is irretrievably dimmed. All the explanations and excuses ever offered would never suffice to reseat Him on the throne of the universe, or guarantee the safety of those who have been saved from the wreck.

The great white throne has no rational place in orthodox theology. If all unbelievers are doomed to eternal torment, why expend immeasurable power in raising them from the dead, when they are already suffering, simply to condemn the condemned? To inflict punishment before trial is immoral and irrational, and a farce when the guilt is already settled, and the length of the sentence predetermined. The only possible place for an orthodox tribunal is immediately after death, and then only to determine the severity of the sufferings. There should be no necessity for a resurrection when the dead are already agonizing in hell. That is why so little is made of this great judgment. It does not fit into the orthodox scheme at all. It can only serve to drive the dead still further from the god who is the cause of their being and the source of their eternal woe. Its effect on such a god would be disastrous. He would be transformed into the fiend of hell, the destroyer of his own handiwork, the torturer of his own creatures, a god of hate, unable or unwilling to rescue the weak and erring souls which he had formed. They were intended for his glory. They turned out to his shame.

Annihilation is incompatible with a judgment. Is it not the height of cruelty to bring back to consciousness one who is doomed to eternal oblivion, merely to inflict further agony upon his soul? And when we reflect upon the tremendous expenditure of energy needed to raise billions upon billions of the dead, the marvelous miracle of rousing them from the unseen, all to no purpose except to enable them to suffer for their sins for a time, before they enter the portals of death once again, our heads and hearts revolt at the callousness of such a procedure. If it were merely a tremendous waste of effort, a futile gesture, it would not be so horrible. It has no warrant, and only serves to deluge the dead with another sea of misery beside that which they have already endured in this life, and all to no profit, either to themselves or to God. Indeed, it would not only add to their sufferings. Its chief result would be to detract from God's name and fame, and bring His glory into total eclipse. A god who is unable to avert such a fearful failure in His plans is not a god at all.



Judgment is a misfit in every theological theory yet propounded. It is inconsistent, discordant, irreconcilable with every plan that does not reclaim man. Its function is to set matters right between man and God, hence it is utterly unnecessary and useless if it produces more suffering for man and further defeat and disgrace for God. It is not judgment at all, but indiscriminating vindictiveness and malevolence if it only tortures or destroys without benefit to either the creature or the Creator. Once we realize what judging means in the Word of God, the great white throne becomes a pledge of universal reconciliation, not of eternal damnation.

Every human being, and, indeed, every living thing, is an exquisite and costly creation of God, infinitely more valuable than the highest achievements of human skill. Man cannot impart life or growth or sensation to any of his creations. All that he can do is to destroy these. What man would not do his utmost to save the work of a lifetime from destruction? And will not God do all that He can to reclaim the lost? Indeed, has He not already done all that is needed to protect His holiness in the sacrifice of Christ? The value of that offering is great enough to include all mankind, and embrace all creation. Now that the price has been paid, the ransom for all laid down, what can God do except to honor the work of Christ and apply the preciousness of His blood to those for whom it was shed? A judgment is just what is needed to accomplish this, where all who have not been won by faith will be reached by sight. There all the wrongs of His creatures will be righted, and they will see how unutterably they have wronged Him. Thus they will be brought to realize that God alone is their All.

## **The Second Death**

DEATH is the designation which God Himself has placed upon the lake of fire to describe its effect upon those who are condemned at the great white throne. Our thoughts about the burning lake are usually the very opposite of this. We imagine it a place of torture, of pain prolonged and excruciating, of terror and despair, of hopeless and helpless horror. Few of our false notions are as difficult to displace as this, for this same lake will be a place of torment for a few others, who have never died before, and our experience with fire has left us with a sense of the anguish which it inflicts, whether we have been burned ourselves, or have seen others writhing in its flames. It is a triumph of faith to face all of this and rest on God's simple word, "This is the second death the lake of fire." In death there is no sensation whatever, no pain or pleasure, no despair, and no delight. We will never understand the lake of fire or God's purpose in it until we clear it of all the false notions with which we have invested it, and simply *believe* that it is oblivion, *death*, in which all sensation ceases and all consciousness of time and of place vanishes. Its victims awake only when they reach their journey's end, when death is abolished and God becomes their All.

### **DEATH AS A FIGURE**

The sum of men's thoughts seems to be infinite: the number of words to express them is limited. Hence it is necessary to *use* words for ideas outside of their strict significance. This is done in figures of speech. Adjacent realms of thought are often covered by one expression. This is especially true of the term *death*. The *meaning* is clear. It is a *return* of the spirit to God, of the soul to the unseen, and of the body to the soil. It is an *analysis*, a dissolution of man into his components. This agrees with the fact that there is no consciousness in death. That this is the actual, literal meaning of the term is put beyond all doubt by the fact that *this feature of death is implied* in some of its figurative usages. A man who is sound asleep is *dead* to the world. Unbelievers are *dead* to God.

But there are passages which seem to imply that the dead are conscious, and these vitally concern the second death. Death and the unseen are pictured as the *receptacle* of the dead when they give up the dead in them, to stand before the great white throne (Rev.20:13). The death *state* cannot literally *contain* the dead, or disgorge them. It is a marvelously expressive way of saying that *those who have died* are raised. And it is highly significant that this resurrection does *not* mention the spirit, for this would vivify them. But the *soul*, the *consciousness*, is especially included by using the same figure of the unseen. "The dead" stand before the throne with their *bodies* and *souls*. How to express the fact that they *literally have* spirit (or they could not have a soul), but are *not vivified* as the saints, would take considerable explanation. It is done most vividly by calling them "dead" and omitting any mention of spirit.

Then the *same words* are used again, but the figure is slightly changed. Death and the unseen are cast into the lake of fire (Rev.20:14). Here the *inhabitants*, the *persons* who have died are intended by the term death. We use this figure freely in other connections. We speak of the "city" or the "country" being blotted out by a catastrophe, when we really mean the *dwellers* in these places. Is it not quite evident from this double use of the terms "death and the unseen," that all those who stand before the great white throne are cast into the lake of fire also? The figure reverts to the condition of those before the throne *ere* they came out of death and the unseen.

The chief source of confusion with regard to the death state, however, lies in those passages where, by association, the term death is used of its *cause*. In fact, Webster's dictionary, which is the authority for the meaning of words in the United States, actually includes "the act of dying" as one of its "definitions." That is the chief fault of this as well as other works of this kind. They "define" words by including their figurative usages, and, thus, they really *diffuse* the meaning, and rob the language of *definition*. Words have a *constant* meaning, yet their figurative usages are *not* constant, but may vary in the same context, as we have already seen. There is hardly any limit to the figurative usages. Webster mentions personification and likeness, and even the cause, among others, as though they were the *meanings* of the word. But even this great work does not mention the figures already discussed, the *receptacle* and the *inhabitants* of the death state.

The *cause* of death is too often confused with the *literal* death state. A living, lively man may be the "death" of a party, if the participants become like the dead because of his activities. Yet no one would insist that he is the death state! But, in our study of the Scriptures, we seem to be blind to such obvious figures of speech. The "death of the cross" is one of the most marvelous of the passages where the *cause* overshadows the death state. The shame and ignominy which attended Christ's decease is vigorously voiced by this famous figure. The same thought comes out in "the *pangs* of death" (Acts 2:24), "the *suffering* of death" (Heb.2:9). This figure is implied in the phrase "*what* death" He was about to die and glorify God (John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19). A less dreadful allusion to the crisis of dying is found in the phrase "tasting death" (Mark 9:1; Heb.2:9). This seems to have been the common figure for the end of life. Death itself is not a substance which the tongue can taste, and there is no taste or any other sensation in the literal death state. The word *injure* (Rev.2:11) does not imply sensation, for land (Rev.7:2), and grass (Rev.9:4), and olive oil (Rev.6:6) may be injured.

### THE LAKE NOT LITERAL DEATH

Fire is not literal death. I have seen tremendous flames spouting from an oil well, with a white cloud continually hovering over it, yet no one called it death. I have seen the fumes of Vesuvius, and there was no death. Yet, since then, Vesuvius has been the death of many. A friend once told me that he nearly lost his life on Kilauea, the volcano on the Hawaiian islands. It almost became his death. This was, perhaps, the nearest that we can come to a lake of fire. Everyone will acknowledge that these craters are not literally the death state. Yet the same situation exists in regard to the lake of fire. It is not literal death, but the *cause* of death. To derive the literal *meaning* of death from this figurative usage would almost reverse its actual definition.

The "death" which is cast into the lake of fire becomes the lake of fire. This is impossible literally. Yet, in figure, the use of the same term even for different figures, identifies the literal death caused by the lake of fire. It was the *first* death that gave up the dead. This is confirmed by calling it the *second* death. Two things must be intrinsically the same or they cannot be related as first and second. The first death in view in this passage was not the crisis of dying, for that cannot *give up* the dead in it. Indeed that cannot well be the basis of any figure itself. Neither can such a death be cast into the lake of fire. The first death is confined to the literal death state, so this must be true of the second. All the more so, as it is also the explanation of the function of the lake of fire.

"Literal, if possible." Once we obey this axiom, and allow the literal lake its literal result, which is death with its literal effect of oblivion, all difficulties disappear. It fits in with all other revelation and God's great plan for the race. It may last for as many as twenty thousand years, a period of purgatory in fire that would be unbearable for mortals, and altogether at variance with God's judgment of individuals elsewhere. It would be impossible to reconcile His ways, and His great

purpose to reconcile all with the submergence of infants in a fiery lake for conscious discipline for even a minute, let alone many millenniums. The function of the first death was to bring all into judgment immediately, at the end of life. So the second death ushered all into reconciliation as soon as they have been judged.

What does the second death actually accomplish? To be sure, it involves the loss of the bliss and glory which comes to those who have believed, and who have the free gift of immortality. But for those who do not possess this gracious gift it is a most merciful alternative. Men view their lives from the standpoint of experience and consciousness. What occurs to us when we are asleep or unconscious does not affect our happiness at the time. We cannot admire God's wisdom enough in that He has made death a state of absolute oblivion. It simplifies His dealings with His creatures enormously, and makes it possible for Him to be just and equitable. How anyone could justify God in holding the antediluvian world in conscious suspense for these thousands of years before bringing them into judgment, is inexplicable. Let us never accuse Him of such a crime.

To a human being who judges by his consciousness there is no interval of time between death and resurrection. Abel, the first man to die, will be raised, or rather vivified, nearly six thousand years ago--so far as he will be aware at the instant of his awakening. It is even possible, should it happen that he was begging for mercy at the time of his death, and expired with an unfinished sentence on his lips, that he will complete the petition before he realizes what has occurred. I remember the case of a Hollander who had been struck on the head while issuing an order, and injured so that he partly lost his mind. When an operation relieved the pressure on a certain part of his brain, the first thing he did was to finish the command to his workmen, which had been interrupted by the accident. The time between was a total blank.

So it will be with the believer. I feel certain that many saints who have ardently waited for the coming of Christ will awake under the impression that He came just as they were about to die, or during their lifetime. Indeed, has He not wisely planned it so that He comes to every one of His own at the close of their course, and yet this occurs at the same instant for them all? That is the ideal, and God is able to attain it. Not death, but His coming, is set before each one of His beloved, and, for all practical purposes, this is what takes place. Experimentally (though not actually) every time a saint dies the Lord comes in glory and gathers him to Him, together with all other saints of this economy, whether past or future! Impossible, but true. And who would have it otherwise? Can His inimitable wisdom be excelled?

A shimmer of this glorious wisdom falls upon the unbelieving dead. They also awake to find themselves, with all of their kind, of every age and every clime, before the Judge of all the earth. And when they die again, it will not be a long, dreary, unbearable suspense, but an instantaneous entrance into the glories of the consummation. For them the last eon will have no existence. For them we must fold our charts so that the consummation immediately follows the great white throne. For them the lake of fire is immediately transformed into the ineffable bliss which even we, His saints, but feebly apprehend, which comes only to those in whom God is All.

Some will object that this is casting them into eternal bliss, rather than into the lake of fire. Such an objector has at least understood my words, even if he has missed their spirit, and has forgotten that, at this time, the dead *have been* judged. It is I who am the stickler for a literal interpretation. I am not making the lake figurative, hoping thus to ease my heart at the expense of my head. The casting and the fire and the death are all as literal as they can be. The death here spoken of, being given in a definition, must be literal. As literal fire produces literal death, it also is literal. There is only one literal interpretation possible. It is supremely satisfactory. Various figurative interpretations have

been offered. None of them has proved permanently tenable. They all arise from faulty views of judgment and of death, and are futile once these are clearly grasped.

And, from this viewpoint, can we not see the absolute necessity of the fire? It is not to torture the sinner but to do away with sin. God cannot be All in mortal men. He will not dwell in corruptible bodies. They must be made fit for His august presence. And what can picture and also provide such a complete destruction of all that is pernicious in man as to dissolve him into his elements? Ashes are clean, yes, cleansing. Fire is the best purifier. In fact, it is probable that our ideas of purity come from *pur*, the Greek for fire. The utter destruction of the sinner by the lake of fire clears the ground for his vivification as a temple of God at the consummation. Is not all this harmonious and satisfying, yes, comforting and glorious?

And this is no purgatory! It is quite the opposite. The sinner feels and does hardly anything. There is no conscious, long-lasting torture, no gradual cleansing of the old, no miraculous life within the flames of death. Nothing is strained. All is natural. Man is debased and God is glorified. All of God's destructive processes have been comparatively swift. Why should not His last be the swiftest? Let us always remember that the casting into the lake of fire comes *after* the dead have been judged, and all has been set right. The indignation and fury, affliction and distress which comes on every human soul who effects evil (Rom.2:9), *has been* experienced. It is a part of the judging that will then be past. The death in the lake of fire is not part of the judging. It is not a place of torment for those who are mortal!

The problem as to the condition of those who have been judged, between this time and their reconciliation to God at the consummation, is a difficult one, if we seek to solve it apart from revelation. If our hearts are in tune with God, we will *wish* them to *experience* immediate reconciliation. If our heads are in harmony with His great eonian purposes, we will not reconcile them until after the eons are over. *And God, in His inimitable wisdom does both of these* by introducing the second death. They do *not receive* eonian life, yet they *experience* immediate deathlessness. We rightly think that, when God has judged His creatures, He should not delay in clasping them to His bosom. Yet we see that, for His own glory, and for the good of these very creatures, this must be delayed until Christ has put all other enemies beneath His feet. Death must be the last, and the second death must not yield until He has abrogated all sovereignty and authority and power (1 Cor.15:24). The last eon, on the new earth, has no place in its plans for the judged of mankind. That would destroy its character and its lesson.

Let us never fall into the common error of thinking that the great white throne is only a trial, and that the sentence pronounced is the lake of fire. That would be a travesty of justice indeed! Why have a trial, to determine the amount of guilt and the proper infliction, if all, without distinction, are foredoomed to receive the same sentence! No indeed! The trial and the sentence *and its execution*--for all this is included in the one word *judging*--all take place in the interval between the first and second death of the sinner. Thus it will be possible to be just, and deal with each case according to its merits. The many differences between those who sinned much and those who sinned little, those who sinned against light and those who sat in darkness, those who never heard of God, and those who defied His name, all these will be recognized and rectified. Only thus can the Judge of all the earth do right. Only so can the judgment proceed along the lines God Himself has laid down as detailed in the early chapters of the epistle to the Romans.

The main point which we seek to press upon our readers is to accept God's declaration that, for those who are judged before the great white throne, the lake of fire is the second *death*. If we take God at His word, exactly and accurately, and add nothing to it and take nothing from it (which is a very

difficult feat for us mortals) then all our objections will vanish. He does *not* say that it is a *painful* death, or a *slow* death or a *horrible* death. These are all figments of our imagination. In death there is no pain, and death by violence need not be painful, however it may appear. We have no right whatever to make either the dying or the death in the lake of fire a thing to be dreaded. It is not so at all.

There is every reason to think that the deluge brought much more individual suffering than the lake of fire. Yet even this is not certain. We have been taught by pictures that the waters gradually drove the people to the heights and that their end came only after days and weeks of fearful, frightful, dreadful despair. The remains of animals found in northern ice seem to hint that it may have been an instantaneous death, that a wall of water drowned the unfortunates in a moment. But in the case of the lake of fire we are sure. The word *cast*, which seems so cruel at first, is really filled with mercy. It suggests a sudden and settled end. A second is all that is needed.

I once had an experience which taught me a salutary lesson. I suppose the most sensitive parts of the human frame are the finger tips. At least their constant use for the purpose of touching makes them very sensitive to any contact. When I was a young man I very foolishly undertook to clean parts of a printing press while it was running. With a rag I reached far into the revolving mechanism on which steel fingers opened and closed as they grasped the sheets. My rag caught and dragged my hand through, and the steel grippers tore open the last three fingers of my right hand. I still bear the scars. In fact, I can tell the approximate temperature by the long seam on my little finger, which will not straighten out in cold weather.

Oh! You may exclaim, how painful that must have been! One person who saw it became ill and almost fainted at the sight. Everyone was so stunned that I had to take charge myself, and order them to call a doctor. *But I had no pain in my hand.* I could see the bleeding flesh and the bared bone, but it seemed to have little sensation. If I had died then and there I would not have suffered, except from fright. Later I had pain aplenty, but not enough at the time to give it a name. I have heard of some similar experiences. Livingstone, the African explorer, was bitten in the shoulder by a lion, and he felt no pain at the time. I feel quite sure that animals which are the prey of others seldom feel the pangs they are supposed to, especially if the blood flows. It is a merciful provision that sudden violence stuns the nerves so that they do not function.

Death, in the Scriptures, that is, the Greek word *thanatos*, always means the state consequent on dying, but in current English it is also used for the act of dying. In our Bible it occurs in this sense. In John 4:47 we read that the nobleman's son was "at the point of *death*." He was about to be *dying*. Usually the context makes the matter clear, or should do so, but that depends upon the reader. When I speak of the *process* of "death," I have taken it for granted that everyone will understand me to refer to the experience which immediately precedes the death state, not death itself, for there is no experience possible in death. When we use the word "death" of the *cause* of death, we are not really giving it a new meaning, but giving it a figurative usage. For instance, "the death of the cross" is not the spirit and soul and body of our Lord nailed to the cross in the death state, during the three days before His resurrection, but the experience which caused His death. Literally, it is His *dying* on the cross. But the figure carries us further than that. It implies the shame and ignominy which is the portion of the worst criminal.

I do not deny that gradual death by fire may be excruciating. Yet such has been the portion of some of God's choicest saints. But neither nature nor revelation gives any warrant for thinking that the lake of fire is the cause of pain to any who find in it a second death. For those who live in it and are tormented, it is an entirely different matter. I have no reason for believing that a human being could

live more than a few seconds in a lake of fire. Death would come almost instantly. And in that time it is not likely that there would be appreciable suffering.

It is a question just how much those who stand before the great white throne will know of their fate; we are not informed whether they are told about the lake of fire or not. This we can well leave with God. If they know it, they will have far less to dread than anyone at the present time, saint or sinner. Were men absolutely sure that, at death, they would be taken suddenly without previous suffering or appreciable pain, it would be a great consolation, for that sort of death is much to be preferred to the one which befalls the majority of mankind. God could have doomed those who are judged before the throne to die as they had died before, of disease and senility, and have made this a part of their judgment. But it seems to me that the purpose of such experiences is to humble us, not simply to set us right. It is most probable that God's judgment will not be prolonged sufficiently to include such inflictions. We cannot look upon them as judgments, as they are the lot of mankind long before they enter into the judgment, before the first death. There seems to be no indication that the second death affects the judgment at the great white throne, except that, as a result of its condemnation, no eonian life is granted to anyone, and they have no part in the blessings of the final eon, either in the heavens or on the earth. They pass these in oblivion, death.

Still further it is scriptural to believe that it will be a *release* from pain. In various degrees and for various periods, according to their deserts, "indignation and fury, affliction and distress" (Rom.2:9), will be the portion of those who stand before the great white throne. Men are not simply *tried* there. They are *judged*. And this continues until they are cast into the lake of fire. Then, in death, all sensation *ceases*. It is a *release*, not a torture chamber. Most of us have known cases of human suffering where we have questioned the wisdom of combating death. We breathe a sigh of relief when the last long sigh has closed a case of unbearable torture. So will the lake of fire mercifully close the judgment period of all who suffer for their sins. It is not an infliction but its cessation.

It is worth our while to note God's use of the two elements, water and fire, in His great eonian operations. The first two eons are separated by watery boundaries--the disruption and the deluge. So the last two eons are bounded by fire. This element plays a powerful part in the judgments which usher in the kingdom, and it is most prominent between the last two eons, for the greatest of all conflagrations will precede the new heavens and the new earth. Both in fact and in figure fire is the final cleansing agent. So it is in utmost harmony to use this element in effecting the second death of those who will be made alive at the consummation.

## **The Appreciation of God**

GOD HAS A GOAL. He intends to become All in all His creatures (1 Cor.15:28). He will accomplish this by way of reconciling all His enemies by the blood of Christ's cross, by justifying, vivifying, and saving all mankind at the consummation (Col.1:20; Rom.5:18; 1 Cor.15:22; 1 Tim 2:4; 4:10). But before this there is a long and painful preparatory process, a weary way which leads His creatures to this consummation, much of which is as dark and distressing as the goal is bright and filled with blessing.

Almost all of us are short-sighted. We see a part of the way but we do not see the end. We confuse the going with the goal. Our translations are partly to blame, for they fail to clearly mark the fleeting nature of the process, as it is in the original. And if an honest attempt is made to carry this across in a concordant version, it clashes with our conventions and our hard hearts. God grant that we may faithfully witness, in our renderings, when God reveals a *fact*, and when it is only a temporary *process*, for this He has clearly indicated in the Original.

Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it on the way. Men make it the end. No matter how an unbeliever is dealt with, whether he dies as a result of sin, or by the direct intervention of God, whether he be cast into outer darkness or into Gehenna, *this is not his end*. All who do not belong to Christ will be roused from the dead and judged before the great white throne. There they are not forgiven, or saved, but judged. But this is not their end. All these will be cast into the lake of fire, to suffer the second death. *Even this is not their end*. God does not reach His goal in any of His disciplinary measures. These only prepare His creatures for it. Let us not confuse the going with the goal.

Very little is said to us about God's goal until Paul completes the orbit of God's Word with his later revelations. Hints there have always been by which hearts in tune with God have been filled with high hopes. But it is not until the meridian sun of God's grace has come from behind the clouds of sin and law, to reveal the deepest recesses of God's immanent love to the most undeserving of the race, it is not until the truth for the present was made known that God tore aside the veil of the future completely, and gave us a clear and unclouded view of His ultimate. Once we revel in this we will never go back to previous revelation on this theme, for like the curtain of the tabernacle, it seems to hide, rather than reveal the full blaze of the Shekinah glory.

The usual way is to view the goal in the darkness of the way. We go back to passages which deal with judgments and allow them to throw their dark shadows across the consummation. We should *believe* that *God will justify all* mankind (Rom.5:18), and view the previous judgments in the light of this final achievement. We bring up passages which tell of death, to darken God's declaration that it will be abolished. We should *believe* that *God will make death inoperative at the last*, and view the previous passages in this glorious light. We turn to texts which prove that unbelievers will be lost or destroyed, and, with these passages, dim the great declaration that God wills the salvation of all. We should illumine them with the later and higher revelation. We find God's enemies in the fiery lake at what seems to be the close of revelation, and misuse this fact to deny God's declaration that all will be reconciled (Col.1:20). We should not take one to destroy the other, but believe both, for reconciliation *follows* estrangement, and it alone accords with God's final goal.



How perverse and blind have we often been! When God says *all*, we have said *some*. When God speaks of a very small fraction of mankind, such as the living nations who stand before Christ to be judged according to their treatment of Israel--a mere handful as compared with all mankind--then we extend their sentence to *all*! Faith has almost fled from the earth. What calls itself faith is mostly a masquerade, for it refuses God's Word for the traditions of men, yet insists that it is genuine.

Let us allow the light of the latest revelation to illumine the earlier, partial unfolding, and let us not use the earlier to eclipse the latest, the highest, and the only complete unveiling of God's mind and heart.

### **MULTIFARIOUS WISDOM**

The past eons seem to be replete with failures on God's part. Adam sinned and offended, and brought the whole human race into the service of sin and the doom of death. Could not God have prevented this by prudent provision? Thereupon the race that sprang from him became so wicked that they had to be almost wiped out by a deluge. Why did not God foresee this and forfend the evil? Thereafter the nation of Israel was segregated to be a blessing to the balance. But they became worse than the rest and even crucified God's Christ, so seemed to utterly fail to fulfill their function. Failure! Failure! All that God did seemed to end in futile failure. Both creation and revelation were full of evidences of God's infinite wisdom, yet His dealings with mankind apparently showed the reverse. He seemed to pyramid one failure upon another.

To the human, unanointed eye the present operations of the Deity are the greatest failure of all. In almost every avenue of life the mortals that He made fall short. They excel principally in evil and deathdealing devices. But the greatest of all failures is Christendom, His avowed representative on earth. Notwithstanding its immense privileges, its tremendous advantages over Israel, it has sunk even lower than the favored nation. Only the eye of faith on earth can see the multifarious wisdom of God in these apparent failures, for only those whose hearts have been opened to the secret which He concealed from the eons hitherto, are able to apprehend the vastness of the wisdom therein displayed.

### **THE REALIZATION OF GOD**

THE KNOWLEDGE of God's Word is good, an acquaintance with His ways is better, but a realization of Himself is best. Faith accepts His sayings, confidence acquiesces in His ways, love rests in His essence. Let us believe what He says, and we will not only delight in what He does, but exult in what He is. How few of His saints are found with even the first of these favors! Faith they have, but so scant, so adulterated with credulity, and so faltering, that God's ways are dark and inscrutable, and He Himself is hid behind a thick curtain of ignorance and tradition. Alas! even to His children, He is the great Unknown and Unknowable, the Distant, the Unapproachable, even the Dreadful Deity.

The attitude of scant faith is clearly revealed when its own welfare is at stake. It does not deem it safe to leave the future in God's hands, without some definite promise, some written bond, that will hold Him to His Word. It is this trembling unbelief which changes God's eons into eternities, for it rightly reasons that, if the eons end, there is no certainty of future bliss, unless they leave their fate in the hands of a God Whom they do not fully trust! It is true that God has made no "promises" beyond the eons. As He gives us deathlessness and incorruptibility, why should we be concerned about "eternal" life? Where there is no death, such a "promise" would only reflect upon His character, and our future welfare is far more dependent on His integrity than on His declarations.

It will be seen in the Scriptures that the abundance of promises decreases rapidly once the

millennium is past. Not many refer to the new earth and the new heavens. There is hardly a specific engagement on God's part beyond the eonian times. Why should there be? There is no need for many promises when all men are vital with life and where sin has been repudiated, where faith is replaced by sight, and all are subject to God. Where there is no sin there can be no salvation, where there is no enemy there can be no rescue. With God the All of all hearts, the present is bliss and the future felicity, and there can be no concern, no anxiety as to either.

There are saints who would be in despair if the promises in the Bible should suddenly be revoked, and they should be left entirely at the mercy of God, without any recorded document to which they could hold Him. But can they hold Him? If He is not to be trusted without a definite promise, can we be sure that He will stand by His Word? Promises are expedient and gracious, a help to confirm faith, and we would not be without a single one of them. Yet our confidence should not rest in the promises but in Him Who made them. We should be more than willing to trust Him when and where His promises do not reach.

Scant faith is afraid of the consummation. Israel's promises on earth and ours in the heavens come to a conclusion when Christ abdicates the throne. We will no longer reign, for all rule will be abolished. Our eonian mission will be fulfilled, for all will be reconciled. True, there is no death, so we cannot die. Deathlessness indeed is ours, yet we have no written assurance of peace or happiness or glory in that consummation. To the average saint it looks like a leap in the dark, or into an abyss without a bottom. There is nothing on which faith can fasten--except God! And is not this precisely what He wishes? Then He will be All in every one. Faith, promises, and all such crutches will be past. They would only mar the perfect and mutual confidence which will exist between God and His creatures. It is not a leap in the dark, but a serene entrance into light and love unlimited.

The overwhelming glory of God's grand ultimate has been utterly wrecked by current unbelief, and the substitution of such a fearful future *for God* as the annihilation of the bulk of His creatures, or their far more heartless and hideous torment for all eternity. Let us for the time consider these only as they affect God's glory, not human welfare. If He is a real God, then all destiny is the deliberate fruit of His efforts. Even if He is the subordinate deity of Christendom, Who has lost control of His creation and cannot do what He would, these destinies are foreseen and allowed by Him, and He makes no adequate effort to prevent them. Say what you will, they make it impossible for even His saints to trust Him as they should.

If He is such a God, the thought will arise, Could He not save the bulk of His creatures in the past, how can He preserve His saints in the future? If sin came in and ruined His fair creation against His will, what will hinder a repetition in the eternity to come? Even if we believe His promises, can we rely upon His love and power when they have been fulfilled, and there is no further guarantee? The more closely one considers the false doctrines of annihilation or eternal torment, the more it will be apparent that they make it utterly impossible for God to gain the full confidence of His creatures. The usual result is His dethronement by the doctrines of free will and divine irresponsibility in the past and present, and by the utter eclipse of His ultimate goal in the future. An annihilator and tormentor eternal cannot become All in all, not even if we make the all a tiny residue.

Here we have the secret source which supplied the mistranslations *everlasting* and *eternal*. And this shows why saints are so slow to give them up. They cannot trust their God, and must have a public record to bind His actions in the future. He has promised them eonian life. If this is not eternal, they are not sure--in fact, they are afraid--that He will take life from them when it comes to its end. Can we not see how the promise of "eternal" life really defeats its own purpose? It is given that the saints may get to know God, yet, being endless, it implies that they never attain this goal. As it denies the

possibility that He shall be All in them, it totally defeats the object for which it is given, of making them so utterly content with Him that they not only are willing but eager to leave themselves in His heart, without a single assurance from His lips. What He is, is enough!

It is the office of faith to transfer us, in spirit, to this consummation, even in the midst of our present career, while everything visible still seems the very reverse of God's ultimate. Perhaps never, in the history of mankind, has there been such marked distrust, between men as well as toward God. Confidence is going or gone. Faith is vanishing. And I, for one, freely confess that, without a knowledge of the consummation, when God will reconcile all and become All in all, I could not have confidence in a deity who allowed the world to work itself into such a mess, and who can do little more for most men than to sweep them into destruction, extinction or torment. I, too, would fear that such a god must be put under bond to perform His oaths, and even then--? But now, how can I distrust Him? Mankind is just where He has brought it. The effect of all the present evil and distress will be salutary. God will get glory out of it, and men will be prepared by it to appreciate the gifts He has in store for them.

Here we have the great contrast between man's miserable self-made destinies and God's grand and gracious goal. Man not only destroys God's creatures, but undermines His deity and robs Him of the appreciation of His heart's handiwork. God's goal not only upholds His deity but gives His creatures such confidence in Him that all concern as to His love and power disappears. They willingly, yes eagerly, leave themselves in His hands without any assurance whatever on His part as to His intentions. Faith and hope are no longer needed, so they vanish, and only love remains. Knowing Him as God, limitless in power and wisdom, and as essential Love, they prefer to remain in fond anticipation of that which the ear hears not, to which the heart of man cannot ascend, that which God makes ready for those who are loving Him. They rely on His Word, they delight in His ways, and they revel in the appreciation of Himself.